

## **Personal and Professional Background Information**

My name is Steven P. Wilburn. I was born on December 19, 1948 in Chicago, Illinois, I was raised in East St. Louis and Belleville, Illinois. I am married to Margaret Wilburn, and I am the father of five children, nine grandchildren and one great-granddaughter. I reside in Newport Beach, California.

After graduating from Althoff Catholic High School in 1966, I enlisted and served in the United States Marine Corps from 1967 to 1969. I am a decorated Vietnam War Veteran, including the Purple Heart Medal. I was air medevac'd from DaNang, Vietnam to the United States in November of 1967. I spent 9 months in the Great Lakes Naval hospital recuperating. I was honorably discharged in April, 1969. I have a VA rating of being 90% Disabled.

I am the founder of, and currently serve as the Chief Executive Officer and President, of FirmGreen, Inc. FirmGreen®, is a privately held, integrated energy company participating in virtually all aspects of the global energy markets. FirmGreen® is involved with identifying, inventing, developing and commercializing new and emerging energy technologies that promise to play an increasingly important role in the world's energy mix.

Fundamentally, I am an energy executive, with over thirty years of experience in the development and implementation of energy production technologies and alternative energy projects. I served as Founding Chairman of the International Cogeneration Society.

I have successfully commercialized numerous patents in areas of energy production and energy efficiency. I have invented, or developed, breakthrough approaches in the areas of Fluidized Bed Technology, Landfill Gas Utilization, Anaerobic Digestion of Organic Wastes, Biogas Upgrading Technology to CNG fuel quality, Smart Plant Controls and Smart LED Lighting Systems. I have recently filed a continuation-in-part patent application to further advance FirmGreen's IP in the LED marketplace under the Registered trademark of VerdeWatts®.

Under my leadership, FirmGreen has received the following awards:

- 2008 EPA Project of the Year for converting landfill gas into compressed natural gas vehicle fuel.
- 2009 Solid Waste Association of North America for proving the efficacy of upgrading Landfill Gas to fuel grade quality.
- 2013 ExIm Bank of the United States Renewable-Energy Exporter of the Year Award for the Gàs Verde project at the infamous Gramacho landfill that was depicted in the critically acclaimed Film Documentary "wasteland". The landfill gas project is located at Gramacho near Rio de Janerio, Brazil.

I currently serve on the Environmental and Renewable Energy Sub-Committee and the Advisory Committee to the Export Import Bank of the United States. I have served in in both capacities since January of 2013.

## **The Written Statement of Steven Wilburn on the Reauthorization of the ExIm bank of the United States.**

Chairman Hensarling, Ranking Member Waters, and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me here today to testify about the Export-Import Bank of the United States.

Areas the Committee was seeking opinion based on my expertise:

### **Comment to be addressed-- taken from Invite letter .."The Banks role in the Economy"**

Speaking from my personal experience of export finance, I will offer a bit of background. After the near collapse of the banking system of the United States in 2008, FirmGreen was forced to divest itself of a partnership with one of the largest investment banks of the United States. They were an equity and debt partner in the amount of 17 million USD, and were the source of a \$25 million dollar revolving credit facility. Through no fault of FirmGreen, our multi billion-dollar partner was teetering on the brink of insolvency. As a result, they stated they were forced to divest themselves of certain assets. I was forced to exit our relationship with the new "Bank Holding Company" at great cost to me. It was an 11 million dollar hit to my company.

I had to pull this divestiture off within several months. Tall order indeed! But we did it. Out of the 46 companies in the Renewable Development Fund they managed, FirmGreen is one of the only survivors.

The credit markets crash also cost FirmGreen a \$20 million Biogas project opportunity in Ohio that was fully permitted when we were left at the altar. We were unable to source alternate financing in the chaotic financial markets of 2009 and had to abandon the project and ultimately untangle a trailing lawsuit that was filed due to my Bank's inability to perform on the project finance. I prevailed in the costly lawsuit and settled the suit and was able to reclaim 4 million dollars worth of previously installed equipment.

At this troubled time in the US economy, I was negotiating to obtain a large landfill gas project in Brazil. In 2010, FirmGreen was formally invited by Gàs Verde SA to submit a Landfill Gas Upgrading project proposal. Also invited to propose, were the French firm Air Liquide, and the German firm Linde--both multi-billion dollar international conglomerates.

The Brazilian company was impressed with our technology, but they asked us if we could offer long-term project finance as part of our proposal. I contacted my Commercial Bank officer who advised they could not undertake a loan for FirmGreen to finance the project in Brazil. That was simply out of the question: the reluctance of banks to support small business exports because of the difficulty in collecting payments in a foreign country, coupled with the tighter credit standards following the financial crisis, made this impossible.

My Brazilian client requested that we approach my ECA for possible assistance. I was embarrassed that I needed ask my clients what the acronym ECA represented. They advised that

ECA stood for “Export Credit Agency” and that the US ECA was “The Export Import Bank of the United States”. This was the first time in my memory that I had even heard of Ex-Im Bank.

So, we found out through our local SBA contacts that Ex-Im had a local office in Irvine, CA, and we called them. The staff was friendly and walked us through the Bank’s structure and how my clients might be able to qualify for export finance.

Over the course of the next three weeks, I was able to come up to speed on Ex-Im’s lending criteria, etc. and girded up to do battle with my better capitalized, and ECA advantaged competitors.

Air Liquide, offered finance through France’s ECA – Compagnie Française d'Assurance pour le Commerce Extérieur (COFACE),

Linde Corporation offered finance through Germany’s ECA-Euler Hermes Kreditversicherungs-AG,

The Gas Verde management wanted our technology, but we were informed that we were too high on the capital financing costs, and since we had no assurance from my corporate bankers unless we were able to match the other firms ECA’s financing terms and conditions, we would lose the deal!

My client and I flew to Washington DC and conferred with ExIm Bank officers and staff. They informed us that there were rules governing the project financing terms that these particular ECA’s were able to offer, and that ExIm could indeed compete if the Bank’s project credit, technology and environmental impact criteria could be met.

Based on this news, my client submitted a formal application and the vetting process began. I believe it was a little over 4 months before the application was deemed complete and a Board Approval Meeting was set. The Loan was approved and became operational in June 2011.

FirmGreen with the help of Ex-Im became Giant killers! We had won a 32 Million Dollar contract over two multi-billion dollar foreign competitors!

As a result, FirmGreen’s technology has been commercially proven on the world stage The Gramacho Landfill Biogas is being treated and conveyed by a private pipeline to the local Petrobras oil refinery where it displaces up to 12% of its gas energy requirements. It is the largest Biogas to pipeline quality gas project in the world.

Gas Verde wants to buy at least three more plants from us under similar ExIm debt structures. A total of another possible 65 million in contracts is on the line.

I believe that ExIm is needed for small businesses like FirmGreen to compete on an international basis with competitors using their country’s ECA credit terms.

According to my research in preparing for my testimony I discovered that in FY 2013, the Bank approved a record-high 3,413 small-business authorizations – nearly 90 percent of the total number of Ex-Im authorizations.

In FY 2013, 625 U.S. small businesses were first-time users of Ex-Im products.

The Bank authorized amounts under \$500,000 for 1,923 small-business transactions.

Ex-Im Bank authorized more than \$5.2 BILLION in financing and insurance for the direct support for American small-business exporters in FY 2013.

Exports from small businesses constituted 20 percent or more of Ex-Im-supported exports in nearly every state in the nation.

**Comment to be addressed- taken from Invite letter**

**...”the extent to which its programs may shift jobs between sectors of the economy rather than resulting in net job creation”**,

I can only speak to the jobs involved with FirmGreen’s Biogas technology. We created a net 165 jobs according to the suppliers who worked on the fabrication of FirmGreen’s technology. These were mostly jobs at small machine and welding shops in the Mid-West of the United States. Specifically, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, Indiana, and Oklahoma. In addition, we created and supported manufacturing, warehousing, trucking and Maritime shipping jobs in California, Florida and Texas.

These were good paying jobs, most of them paying well above the minimum wage.

The companies involved in providing support services, fabricating and shipping FirmGreen’s equipment were: (See following Page)

## Partial Vendor list for Gàs Verde Project (Brazil)

<b>Vendor</b>	<b>Location</b>
FlexSteel	Houston, Texas 77002
Rotary Compression Tech. Inc	Sidney, OH 45365
R&R ENGINEERING	TULSA,OK 74170
Silvan Industries Inc	Marinette, WI 54143
MEDAL -A DIVISION OF AIR LIQUIDE ADVANCE TECH LLC	NEWPORT, DELAWARE 19804
FCX PERFORMANCE	COLUMBUS, OH 43219
GARDNER DENVER NASH, LLC	ST. LOUIS MO 63195
GE OIL & GAS OPERATIONS LLC	OSHKOSH, WI 54902
PIPE & VALVE, INC.	COLUMBUS, OH 43212
Defabco	COLUMBUS, OHIO 43227
MOTION INDUSTRIES	COLUMBUS, OH, 43209
COLUMBUS FASTENERS CORP.	COLUMBUS, OH 43212
Advance Industrial Manufacturing	Grove City Oh 43123
MARTIN PAINTING	GROVE CITY, OHIO 43123
SCIOTO VALVE	WESTERVILLE, OHIO 43082
FLUIDRAULICS, INC	TWINSBURG, OH 44087-2441
Reece Fluid Power	TOLEDO OHIO 43623
BUCKEYE FABRICATING CO.	SPRINGBORO, OH 45066
MOTION INDUSTRIES	COLUMBUS, OH, 43209
AUSTIN CO	AUSTIN CO
Hersh Rubber and Packing	Canal Winchester, OH
Intermarine Shipping	Houston, Texas
UTC Shipping Texas	Port of Houston, Texas
Mayekawa Refrigeration	Covina CA 91724
SulfaTreat	Sauget, Illinois
Paul Hastings LLC (Legal Services)	Costa Mesa, CA 92626
Guild and Associates	COLUMBUS, OH 43212
UPS Franchise Store	Irvine, CA 92614
Newtech Engineering Services	Irvine, CA 92614
Quantum Power	Newport Beach, 92663
Greenworld Security	Kokomo, IN, 46902
International Trade & Transportation, Inc.	Pinehurst, Texas 77362
Kinko's	Newport Beach, 92663
Staples	Irvine, CA 92614
Acrion, Inc.	Cleveland Ohio, 44125

**Comment to be addressed- taken from Invite letter**

**“...the extent of which ExIm may benefit some companies while harming others”.**

The only companies that I believe are “harmed” by the US EX-IM Bank are my foreign competitors. Unlike other ECA’s, the US Ex-Im Bank financing is tied directly to US domestic content, meaning that the Ex-Im can only finance the portion of a product that is manufactured in the U.S. This ensures that Ex-Im financing is directly linked to the preservation and creation of U.S. jobs. Once a Borrower is deemed creditworthy by the US Ex-Im Bank, the contracts that are awarded to US Companies are based on quality of products and services, and price. To put this in perspective, if US EXIM Bank is unilaterally dissolved as some Committee members wish, it would only harm US Companies, jobs and our recovering economy. I can tell you that there’s nothing more my foreign competitors would love to see.

I understand that several companies, including Delta Airlines, claim they have been harmed by the financing programs offered by Ex-Im bank. I am not an expert in air travel business, but I do know Boeing creates and supports thousands of good paying jobs by selling its American-made aircraft overseas and utilizes the competitive credit terms offered by the Ex-Im Bank for its credit worthy clients. Thousands of small business sub-contractors indirectly benefit from Boeing contracts. As a former US combat veteran, and the beneficiary of the life saving benefits of Close Air Support, I can also state categorically, that maintaining our aircraft industrial manufacturing base is critical to our National Defense. With US Military spending down to its lowest level in decades, I believe we must maintain our industrial manufacturing base. For, it is our manufacturing base that supports our national defense in peacetime and is able to rapidly ramp up in times of War. Keeping our manufacturers strong through innovative programs such as those offered by the ExIm Bank, are vital for protecting our National security.

**Summation**

In summation, I would like to state for the record that I am a firm believer in free trade and limited government, but I do not share -- nor do I understand -- the rabid anti-government animus that seems to be motivating the current attacks on the Ex-Im Bank. Government, in my view, is simply people working collectively to accomplish things for the greater good that can’t be done by individuals acting alone. I have come to realize over the past several years that trading on the world stage is a complex undertaking for small businesses like FirmGreen.

I used to believe that the eight most feared words in the English language were, “We’re the government, we’re here to help you!” Thank God for the folks at the US Department of Commerce, The USTDA, The SBA, and the Ex-Im Bank. They have effective outreach programs that make navigating the pathways to international markets understandable and attainable for small Main Street Businesses like FirmGreen.

The aforementioned governmental agencies help me conduct my global business on a level playing field, so my international clients can buy my American-made goods and services at a competitive price.

Finally, please know that FirmGreen has recently lost a \$57 Million dollar Waste to Energy deal in the Philippines. We had initially won the deal in April after hard-fought negotiations, lasting almost a year. But we lost it in May. I received a letter from my client explaining to me that I lost the order as a direct result of the uncertainty created by the public comments made by members of Congress against reauthorization of the Ex-Im Bank. The negative comments against the Bank by key congressional leaders have allowed my competitors to play the “Don’t Count on U.S. Ex-Im Support” card to steal business away from FirmGreen. I have attached a copy of the client’s letter stating the reason they withdrew from our executed Memorandum of Understanding. They still prefer our technology, but require certainty about financing terms equal to that being offered my Korean competitor backed by the Korean Ex-Im Bank.

The Chairman and other members contend that the private sector can effectively assume the role of the Ex-Im Bank. With all due respect to the Chairman and Members of this prestigious Committee, I have yet to be able to find any private sector funding that is competitive, or for that matter, even available, for my overseas Capital Projects. If the Chairman or other members of the Committee are aware of any firms offering such private sector funding, please make such a list publicly available to me and the thousands of other U.S. small business that so desperately need access to this support.

Thank you for allowing me the extreme honor of testifying on this critical issue.