

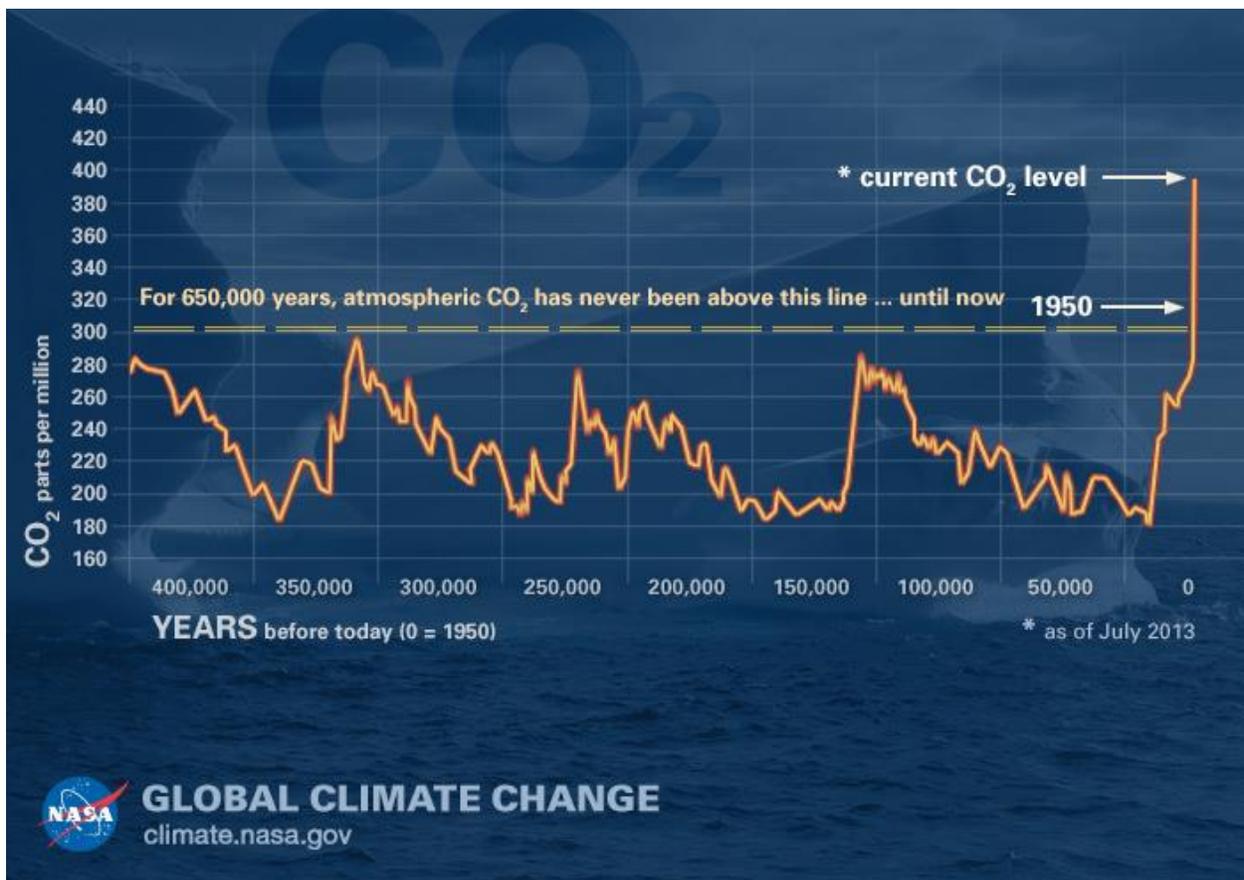
Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

I am Mike Foley, Director of the Department of Sustainability for Cuyahoga County and as some of you know, a former State Representative from Cleveland.

I am here to testify against SB320 and HB554 and any other measure that would attempt to weaken the RPS standards that were put in place in 2007.

As humans we are simultaneously brilliant and our own worst enemies. In relation to the environment, we have made great strides in developing and building and transporting ourselves. Unfortunately as we have done so, we have also put billions of tons of gases into the atmosphere which trap heat and negatively change the ecosystem of our planet.

Over the billions of years that our planet has evolved, there has been relative stability in terms of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Some of the leading scientists in this area actually come from Ohio State University, where they have ice core samples going back over 600,000 years ago and can read the atmospheric make-up of the planet through these samples.



As you can see from this chart from NASA, the level of CO2 has skyrocketed in relation to previous levels throughout history. The balance of this gas in addition to Methane and other heat trapping gases has become severely out of whack over the last 150 years.

If you go back about a year and a half ago, April 2015 was determined to be the hottest month on record by scientists at NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. That set a record until May, 2015 which became the hottest month on record. Which set a record until June, 2015. June, 2015 was the hottest month on record until July, 2015. That string of records for hottest month ever continued for 16 straight months until September 2016. September 2016 it turns out was only the second hottest month on record and slightly cooler than August, 2016.

We are experiencing worldwide record heat events, because we as humans are putting gases into the atmosphere which are trapping heat here on Earth. The results are more severe and costlier storms, longer and worse droughts, ecosystems being disrupted, moving or dying off. We are fundamentally changing our environment in harmful ways.

At times like this, Government has an obligation to step in and ensure that positive changes are made in order to set a different path. I know that many in this body do not believe in government mandates into the economy, but I believe climate change is so serious a threat to the current and next generation of humans, that actions that you may find as distasteful now are the only way to ensure minimizing damage in the future. And because Ohio has such a high reliance on coal as a generation source for our electricity, I believe we have a greater responsibility to change our ways.

We are trying to do that in Cuyahoga County. Two weeks both Republicans and Democrats in Cuyahoga County Council unanimously passed legislation to use our purchasing power of electricity for our buildings to help develop Lake Erie offshore wind (The LEEDCo Icebreaker project) and up to 15,000 solar panels on what was previously unusable landfill acreage. Local clean energy is being developed and just as importantly, local residents will be manufacturing the foundations and parts for the wind turbines, creating the mounting structures and installing the solar panels, staffing the boats which will be floating huge pieces of machinery onto the lake, drafting and redrafting financial, engineering and legal documents to make it all happen. Local clean energy policies mean local clean energy jobs.

The standards which were put in place in 2007 through SB221 were not onerous. They began to put us on a path to becoming a leader in clean energy development. We should return to that path as soon as possible.

I believe that combatting Climate Change is the moral fight of our times. At some point you will be asked what you did to combat it. As a legislator, you have more power to do something than most anyone else in the state of Ohio. The choice before you now is whether to strengthen or weaken clean energy standards. I am desperately hoping that you will strengthen them.