

Ohio House Energy and Natural Resources Committee
House Bill 401
Proponent Testimony
November 19, 2019

Chairman Vitale, Vice Chairman Kick, Ranking Member Denson and Members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, I ask for your support on House Bill 401.

Nearly two years have passed since the first industrial wind project was announced in Seneca County (Republic Wind, LLC; Case Number: 17-2295-EL-BGN). Since that announcement, two additional industrial wind projects have formally been filed with the Ohio Power Siting Board and an estimated three additional wind projects are in some phase of development.

I, along with countless others, have had to face the devastating realization that our beloved community that we call "home" might potentially undergo the transformation from agricultural/residential to heavy industrial with at present more than two hundred wind turbines spread across potentially thousands of acres of land. As the broad awareness of this pending transformation was realized by others in the community, individuals have joined together in the common defense of our communities. The wind project developers in Seneca County have, by their own admission, spent more than a decade planning wind projects and signing lease agreements all this before the general public (i.e. those who would otherwise not financially benefit) were made aware that such a project was even existed. What has transpired is a true struggle that no individual ever wanted, and yet, was forced to become engaged. Writing letters to the editor, writing and calling representatives, senators, and other elected officials, fundraising through bake sales and benefit dinners, conducting public information meetings, walking door-to-door for petition drives, attending county commissioner and township trustee meeting after meeting, staffing information booths at the fair, the flea market, and the farmers market are just a few examples of the new "normal" for those who never wanted wind turbines in their communities.

An awareness of the numerous flaws in the siting of Ohio's wind turbines is made quite apparent to those that have had to endure this grueling process. A foremost concern is the lack of any local control. Let me repeat, there exists no local control in the current siting process of industrial wind projects. Despite what out of state lobbying organizations and wind project developers might say, the payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOT) program does not constitute local control. The PILOT program has proven repeatedly to be inadequate and ineffective. Numerous industrial wind projects are at this very moment in development despite no PILOT program in place for that area.

County commissioners or township trustees with lease agreements, or worse, local elected officials on the direct payroll of the wind project developers is a disappointing and infuriating reality. Of course, under ideal circumstances such conflicts of interest would have been made known to the voters BEFORE these officials were elected into office so they might democratically consider such matters in their voting decisions. Conveniently, this information was suppressed and only revealed AFTER these officials had

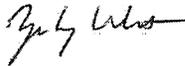
attained office. In numerous cases, the information was only brought to light due to the tireless efforts of multiple citizen activists.

Numerous issues have been raised by citizens regarding industrial wind projects. Undoubtedly, there exist similarities in the issues amongst the various Ohio communities with proposed industrial wind projects. However, the issues raised by one Ohio community are often very different from those in another.

Not an out of state wind industry lobbyist, wind project developer, or special interest group; nor County Commissioner, Township Trustee, or other local elected official with financial conflicts of interest involving the wind industry; not a panel of unelected Columbus bureaucrats; not an absentee landowner; not an out of the county or state workers union; nor elected officials in Columbus, from another city, county, or state are in a position to adequately and rightly determine what is best for a given Ohio community. That determination can only be adequately and rightly made by the people that live, work, go to school, conduct commerce, and otherwise contribute to that community. Instead of allowing others to speak for them, let the citizens in Ohio's communities speak for themselves. When it comes to industrial wind projects and all the factors, good and bad, let the host communities decide their own fate.

Please support House Bill 401 and return to Ohio's communities their voice by giving them the option of referendum when it comes to industrial wind projects.

Sincerely,



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