

November 18, 2019

House Energy and Natural Resources Committee

State Capitol, Columbus, Ohio

Dear Member of the Ohio General Assembly,

I am writing to support HB 401. This bill will help Ohioans correct a grievous error committed regarding siting industrial scale wind turbine projects in our state.

Under current Ohio law, wind turbine projects under a certain voltage output rating are controlled by local zoning regulations. When an individual or business wants to install a wind turbine, they seek approval from the local zoning board responsible for their community. The boards are comprised of local people, deciding local issues, giving local control.

The problem, as I see it, is the process currently used in Ohio for industrial scale wind turbine projects. All decisions regarding the siting, construction, and operation of these facilities falls under the authority of the Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB), centered in Columbus, Ohio. This board, consisting of seven appointed members and their staff are solely responsible for everything.

I became acutely aware of this system in late May 2018 when my wife and I attended a public information meeting in Attica, Ohio. This informational meeting was not sponsored by any of the wind developers who are attempting to gain approval for three current projects in our area with the OPSB. These three projects are known as Seneca Wind, Republic Wind, and Emerson Creek Wind. These three projects, if allowed to be built as proposed, will place 600 foot tall wind turbines on nearly every square mile of an area nine square miles smaller than the City of Columbus in Seneca, Huron, Sandusky, and Erie Counties.

I was one of the many people who had an open mind about renewable energy. Like many others, I only heard the positive arguments for wind energy consistently regurgitated by the wind developers. I hadn't heard the other side. As a retired law enforcement officer, I know full well there are two sides to every story, and I've spent the majority of my adult life investigating a variety of situations, considering all sides and the weight of the evidence before making a decision about anything. After hearing some of the negative impacts of the proposed wind projects at the meeting my wife and I attended, I made a personal visit to the APEX office in Bellevue to find out how and why I was not informed about a project which directly impacted me. The APEX representative indicated that since my six acres was not large enough for them to seek a lease with me that I didn't matter to them. The impression I got from this visit was we didn't matter.

I have spent hundreds of hours reading the thousands of pages of information submitted to the Ohio Power Siting Board by the wind developers. This information includes the supposed subject matter expert studies done supporting the wind developer's assertions that there is no danger from the wind

turbines or any danger is minimal. I have come to the conclusion that the data is skewed. It is manipulated to give the favorable result desired by those wishing to construct wind turbines.

I have travelled to Columbus many times to witness or participate in forums during consideration of HB 6 in the Ohio General Assembly, Blade Shear Workshop at the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO), Public and Adjudicatory Hearings held by the OPSB involving the Seneca Wind and Republic Wind projects. I have also been present and presented testimony during local level considerations of Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) in Erie, Huron, and Sandusky Counties.

The reasons we need a local referendum as allowed by HB 401, allowing the wishes of the majority of local citizens to be heard include:

Wind developers are not required to announce their plans for an area until after they have secured lease agreements, which contain a non-disclosure agreement, with local landowners in sufficient numbers to allow construction of the proposed project. In the case involving my immediate area, these leases were procured with no public knowledge up to 10 years before the wind developer filed the application with the OPSB.

The short timeline established by the OPSB after the project is applied for does not give local residents the ability to adequately review the voluminous support material submitted with the application. This review is necessary to verify the accuracy of the information. Local residents are at the mercy of OPSB staff to critically examine the support material before making their recommendations to the board regarding the project. In staff reports reviewed by me, the staff appears to consistently take the wind developer at their word for mitigation procedures for problems discovered.

Wind projects are unlike any other energy project regarding the size and scope of the difficulties they inflict on an area. We, who live in the footprint of the proposed Emerson Creek Wind, Seneca Wind, and Republic Wind project areas, have legitimate concerns about how the project will affect our roads and bridges, our bird and bat population, our groundwater from disruption and destruction of the KARST, our health from infra-sound effects, and our finances from depreciation of property values. There are other concerns, but I won't take the space to list them all here. We have viewed the problems industrial wind turbines have caused in other areas of the world and across our nation. We have seen what other countries, states, and communities have done to deal with these problems. We can learn from the mistakes made by other well-intentioned, but ill-informed legislators and government officials.

The wind industry consistently claims that the majority of people support green energy. If that is truly the case, they should have no problems with citizens having a vote. They should be leading the charge in support of HB 401. I fail to understand how any elected official could be opposed to giving the citizens a vote on matters which affect them in so many different aspects of their lives.

I believe that a close examination of the process shows that all residents are not included in the process until late in the game, and the current process of the OPSB provides an unfair advantage to the wind developers at the expense of the vast majority of residents in the area.

I am asking you, as elected representatives of all of us, in the democratic republic we all reside in, to look closely at what is occurring with the siting of industrial wind turbine projects in our state. Please look at what other countries and states have learned and pay attention to the change in their philosophy guiding their decisions and the safeguards they have put in place as a result.

Please give us a vote, and support HB 401.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Walt Poffenbaugh". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Walt Poffenbaugh
5094 North Greenfield Road
Willard, Ohio 44890