

Opponent Testimony on Ohio House Bill 401  
Charles D. Steele  
Van Wert County  
Ohio House Energy and Natural Resources, Chair Nino Vitale  
December 3, 2019

Dear Chair Vitale, Vice Chair Kick, Ranking Member Denson, and members of the Ohio House Energy and Natural Resources Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony as an opponent of House Bill 401.

My name is Charles D. Steele. I am a retired judge from the Van Wert County Court of Common Pleas. I have many years of public service including 6 years as a teacher, 18 years Common Pleas Judge, 8 years assistant prosecuting attorney, 6 years Van Wert City Council, 3 years United States Marine Corps and 21 years United States Army Reserve.

I have witnessed first-hand over the last 10 years the tremendous, positive impact of wind energy development in my county.

Two school districts in Van Wert County receive hundreds of thousands of dollars every year from the Blue Creek Wind Farm PILOT payments to fund STEM programs, new teaching staff, new facilities, and school resource officers to keep our students safe. Along with new tax revenues for these schools, our 4-H youth, the Brumback Library, senior center, townships, county government, and Vantage Career Center receive PILOT payments. All of this improvement and new funding comes with no new taxes and no new school levies. As a conservative, I like the idea of less taxes and new tax revenue generated by the private sector.

Equally impressive is the new income diversification that hosting wind turbines offers our farmers. It's an opportunity to harvest another cash crop while at the same time harvesting other traditional crops. And while the income earned from wind is stable and predictable, the income from their other crops are subject to volatile weather and commodity prices.

House Bill 401 takes away these landowners' rights. If farmers want wind turbines on their land using reasonable setbacks such as those allowed before 2014, they should have the right to use their property as they see fit. House Bill 401 would subject the property rights of farmers to the electoral preferences of the neighbors who may live on the other side of a township or who weren't as fortunate to have the opportunity to host turbines on their property.

This bill clearly singles out wind energy versus other energy resources. No other Ohio energy industry, including natural gas, coal and nuclear power faces the development obstacles in House Bill 401. Voters do not have a say when it comes to storing nuclear fuel rods underground, fracking or new pipelines which directly impacts people's groundwater, land, and safety.

As a conservative, this legislation diminishes free-market principles and diminishes property rights.

For these reasons above, I ask that you oppose House Bill 401. Please me contact further should you have any questions.

Thank you for your consideration to oppose this legislation,

Charles P. Steele  
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