

December 3, 2019

Representative Nino Vitale, Chair
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
The Ohio House of Representatives
77 South High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

WRITTEN ONLY

Dear Chairman Vitale,

Recently, a proposed bill that would subject wind energy projects to a referendum vote was introduced into the House of Representatives by Rep. Bill Reineke. The bill, dubbed HB 401, is cited to bring local control to the communities within the footprint of wind development projects. Unfortunately, this bill has devastating fringe consequences that hinder economic and industry growth in the state of Ohio.

This bill would unfairly target wind development projects by allowing municipalities to put wind projects to a referendum vote even after the project has planned, financed, mapped out and even approved by the Ohio Power Siting Board, the agency whose mission it is “to support sound energy policies that provide for the installation of energy capacity and transmission infrastructure for the benefit of the Ohio citizens, promoting the state's economic interests, and protecting the environment and land use.” Despite all of this planning, commitment and diligence, a last-minute kill switch would be in place for wind projects, which would almost certainly severely dampen the interest of private companies considering making investments in wind projects in our state.

The bill also sets a dangerous precedent for more legislation to be written which targets other industries looking to expand into Ohio. While HB 401 proposes only wind turbine development be subject to a local referendum, what is to stop legislation from being written that would put natural gas refineries, coal plants, and nuclear power plants up to a referendum vote, as well. This sort of threat will drive investors out of Ohio for the same reason wind development is being driven out. It is simply a risk that the industry would not find in other states.

Northern Ohioans for Wind urges its supporters to oppose the advancing of HB 401. Wind development is a multibillion-dollar industry that could help rural development and increase the state's energy security. It is up to the state's legislature to, at the very least, not get in the way of positive opportunities for economic development that can provide support.

Respectfully,
Nick Erf
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