



FaCT-Faith Communities Together for a Sustainable Future

FaCT-Faith Communities Together has been working since 2011 on an interfaith basis to protect the Creation and the health and safety of Ohio families threatened by extreme extraction practices like those practiced in the shale development industry. We also work to promote the rapid conversion of our energy system away from fossil fuels and onto green, renewable energy.

SB 33 would impose severe penalties on peaceful protesters who might be demonstrating against the latest environmental outrage in our state, most notably those being undertaken by the fossil fuel industry. Although the recently proposed amendment to the bill removes liability from organizations that are deemed to support protests, this bill is still a threat to individual civil and religious liberty.

In times like these, speaking out against and demonstrating against environmental outrages that threaten people and the natural environment is the duty of everyone with a conscience. As people of faith, we feel duty-bound to undertake this kind of speech which is protected by the Bill of Rights. This can take the form of corporate action as well as individual actions. Individuals, informed by their consciences and religious principles, may feel called to protest and demonstrate. Under an amended SB 33, individuals of conscience would still be liable to the extreme penalties that SB 33 includes.

SB 33 is overkill. Supporters claim that it would protect vital infrastructure against vandalism. But Ohio already has plenty of laws that punish vandals and trespassers. SB 33 is merely designed to intimidate – to discourage citizens concerned about environmental damage from demonstrating and to create a chill amongst citizens of good conscience against expressing their opinions via protests and demonstrations.

Please look to your conscience. Can you really morally defend legislation which is designed to curtail First Amendment rights in order to promote the interests of the fossil fuel industry, an industry that regards environmental damage and resulting health impacts as externalities necessary for their profits? Please, think first of the health and safety of Ohio families. Think of our children and their future. Please do not enact SB 33 into law.

-Ron Prosek, President
(resident of Mentor, OH)

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