

Ohio Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee  
Senate Bill 234  
Proponent Testimony  
January 28, 2020

Chairman Wilson, Vice Chairman McColley, Ranking Member Williams and Members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, I ask for your support on Senate Bill 234.

It has been over two years since the first industrial wind project was announced for Seneca County ( Republic Wind, LLC; Case Number: 17-2295-EL-BGN). Since that announcement, two additional industrial wind projects have been formally filed with the Ohio Power Siting Board. One of those projects was recently placed in an “on hold” status. Meanwhile, an estimated three additional wind projects are in some phase of development for the region.

My neighbors and I are faced with the devastating realization that our beloved community we call “home” might undergo the radical transformation from agricultural/residential to heavy industrial with more than two hundred wind turbines spread across the region. As awareness of the pending transformation was realized by others, individuals have joined together in the common defense of their communities. The wind project developers in Seneca County, by their own admission, have spent more than a decade planning these wind projects and signing lease agreements while the general public was left unaware that any projects even existed. What has transpired is a struggle that no one wanted yet countless citizens have been forced to endure. Submitting letters to the editor, writing and calling representatives, senators, and other elected officials, fundraising through bake sales, raffles, and benefit dinners, conducting public information meetings, walking door-to-door for petition drives, attending countless county commissioner and township trustee meetings, 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 were never asked if they even wanted wind turbines in their communities.

The numerous flaws in the siting of Ohio’s wind turbines is easily understood by those that have to endure its grueling process. A foremost concern is the lack of any local control. Let me repeat, there exists no local control in the current siting 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 repeatedly proven to be inadequate and ineffective. Numerous industrial wind projects are still in development despite there being no PILOT program in place.

County commissioners or township trustees with lease agreements, or worse, elected officials on the direct payroll of the wind project developers is a deeply disappointing and infuriating reality. Such conflicts of interest should have been made known to voters BEFORE these officials were elected into office thereby giving citizens the opportunity to consider such matters when selecting a candidate. All too often, this information is revealed only AFTER these officials attain office and the citizen activists discover such information. In recent elections, the citizens of Seneca County have made their opinions

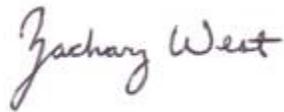
on such conflicts of interest known by voting out of office elected officials that are leaseholders or employees with the wind project developers.

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

No out-of-state wind industry lobbyist, wind project developer, or special interest group; no County Commissioner, Township Trustee, or other local elected official with financial conflicts of interest; not a panel of unelected Columbus bureaucrats; not an absentee landowner; not an out-of-county or out-of-state worker's union; no elected officials in Columbus, from another city, county, and especially another state are in any position to adequately and rightly determine what is best for a given Ohio community. Such a 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 of Ohio's communities speak for themselves. When it comes to industrial wind projects and all the consequences, good and bad, let the host communities decide their own fate.

Please support Senate Bill 234 and return a voice to Ohio's communities by giving them an option for a referendum when it comes to industrial wind projects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Zachary West". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

Zachary K. West  
3040 North Township Road 155  
Tiffin, Ohio 44883