



Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, Chairman Steve Wilson

Opposition Testimony on Ohio Senate Bill 234

**Senator Steve Wilson, Chair
Energy and Public Utilities Committee
The Ohio Senate
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, Ohio 43215**

**Opposition - Testimony of Jeff Danielson
Central States Director
American Wind Energy Association**

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Chair Wilson, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Ohio Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to offer opponent testimony on Senate Bill 234.

My name is Jeff Danielson and I am the Central States Director at the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA). AWEA is the national trade association of the U.S. wind energy industry, representing 1,000 member companies and serving as a voice for wind & renewable energy in America. Members include global leaders in wind power, solar, storage & transmission and energy development, turbine manufacturing, component & service suppliers and utilities.

We employ approx. 114,000 workers across the U.S. and nearly 3,000 of them right here in Ohio. Beyond the strong winds and good opportunities for project development, Ohio is a huge wind energy component-manufacturing state. Sixty-four factories across this state produce key wind turbine components that are used in turbines operating right here in the state of Ohio, and in wind turbines distributed across the nation. Your state has benefited more than most from the supply chain that serves wind energy.

This is important because it means that what happens with wind projects in one corner of the state impacts all Ohioans. Thousands of Ohio citizens work directly in the deployment and maintenance of wind energy projects and the manufacturing of wind turbine components. This workforce is critical to Ohio's tax base, economic growth and industrial expansion. This does not even consider the environmental benefits of wind energy, reducing emissions of harmful pollutants associated with traditional forms of energy production.

The wind energy industry is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the country, with about 1,400 projects operating across 45 states. In communities all over the country, developers are working in partnership with host communities, and are operating those 1,400 projects with broadly positive results. Study after study confirms that attitudes of residents within 5 miles of U.S. turbines are seven times more likely to be positive than negative.¹

¹ http://eta-publications.lbl.gov/sites/default/files/hoen_et_al._2019_attitudes_of_u.s._wind_turbine_neighbors.pdf

Before I address the specific impacts of SB 234, let me share with you the tremendous economic benefits wind farm development has provided to Ohio to date:

- **\$1.48 billion** in capital investment
- **\$7.6 million** in annual tax revenue to schools and local governments
- **\$7.1 million** in annual lease payments to landowners
- **More than 217** Ohio companies utilized during construction
- **\$170 million** spent during construction in Ohio cities and towns

And this doesn't include the additional economic benefit of the two wind farms currently under construction and the additional projects pending at the Ohio Power Siting Board. Once completed, those projects will **double** the numbers I've provided above.

Senate Bill 234 singles out one technology – wind energy – for a completely unique process. A wind farm is one of the few ways to generate energy that doesn't emit any chemical pollution, any radiation, any odor or has any impact on drinking water. To require such a significant additional step for wind energy would “put the thumb on the scale” against wind energy development in the State. It would create a fundamentally different regulatory treatment for wind energy projects in a way that skips the objective and adjudicatory approach that has worked for all types of energy infrastructure in Ohio for decades and replace it – for only this one sector of the energy industry – with a process that would be unduly exposed to political pressures, misinformation campaigns and disproportionately strong local voices.

Senate Bill 234 subjects wind projects to a township-level override even after going through the multi-year, multi-million-dollar certification process under the state's Power Siting Board. Even worse, the proposed township referendum would not occur until the next scheduled primary or general election, potentially jamming up the project timeline and causing severe impacts on project viability.

It is important to remember that wind projects cover several townships, making this process exponentially more complicated and unpredictable. Under this proposal, if any township having any part of a wind project – even a single turbine – within any part of its borders voted to deny the project, it would essentially veto the project, even over a project supported by every other township in the project footprint and over approval of the OPSB after a thorough and rigorous regulatory process.

Finally, Senate Bill 234 would impose a significant burden even on projects that are currently certified and in an advanced stage of development, by mandating that simple amendments to existing certifications will also trigger a new window for township referendum petitions. This would even apply to insignificant changes in the diameter of tower foundations or tiny shifts in the exact placement of individual turbines.

No other state has this kind of double-jeopardy permitting scheme in which proposed energy projects must survive full state-level scrutiny and adjudication, only to face a series of local township elections with varying timelines. No wind company will develop in Ohio under these conditions. Development expense is already at-risk capital. The uncertainty with the post-permitting referenda is a bridge too far and will actually stop development at the outset. Senate Bill 234 is clearly an attempt to impose a further wind development moratorium without calling it such. It's a true signal to the market that wind is not welcome in Ohio.

Rather than let the free market operate and let all energy sources compete on a level playing field, Senate Bill 234 tells wind developers that even if they are successful in the free market, and even if they somehow manage to develop projects within a mandatory statewide one-size-fits-all setback requirement, they must then run a gauntlet patchwork of several various local election-based approval processes.

In other words, under this bill, the state ignores local voices that want to support projects, by waiving the restrictive statewide setback, and empowers just the few local voices opposed to projects which allows them to impose that patchwork election requirement on wind - and only wind – in collecting as few as eight percent of township resident signatures. No reasonable business enterprise would subject themselves to this type of inconsistent treatment.

This bill would devastate wind farm development in Ohio and the fallout is likely to be felt, for example, by engineers and technicians in Urbana, where firms like Honeywell and Hughey & Phillips supply FAA compliance technology to the wind industry. They may feel the impact at the Kaydon Bearings plant in Avon, where they manufacture large diameter turntable bearings and slewing rings and supply the wind industry with high precision pitch and yaw bearings. The impact is also likely to be felt on the investment climate of the state where large industrial customers are increasingly looking to lower their long-term operating costs by purchasing power from wind farms. Ultimately, Ohio residents will suffer by being denied the lower costs of power that free market competition is designed to ensure.

This proposal is fundamentally discriminatory and anti-competitive. Whether at the local level or at the state level, the wind industry just wants to participate on the same terms as other energy-generation facilities. We therefore ask this Committee to end this regulatory assault on a great American industry and reject Senate Bill 234.