

Opponent Testimony of Ohio Senate Bill 234
Charles D. Steele
Van Wert County
Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, Chair Steve Wilson
February 10, 2020

Dear Chair Wilson, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Ohio Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to submit my written testimony to you as an opponent of Senate Bill 234.

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.

Senate Bill 234 could take 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. Senate Bill 234 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 SB 234. 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 Senate Bill 234. Please me contact further should you have any questions.

Thank you for your consideration to oppose this legislation,

Charles P. Steele
354 East Ervin Rd., Van Wert, OH 45891
419-203-5539