

Dave Simons, Ohio Sierra Club Energy Committee

April 24, 2019

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Testimony on HB 6, delivered April 24, 2019 to the Ohio House of Representatives Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy Generation

Chairman Stein, Co-Chair O'Brien, and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy Generation.

My name is Dave Simons, I live in Cleveland in First Energy territory, and I'm speaking for myself as a citizen and ratepayer today, though I do co-Chair Ohio Chapter Sierra Club Energy Committee and often speak to these issues. Others here are speaking for Ohio Chapter of Sierra Club. I am not, today.

House Bill 6 is like a vampire, the bailout bill that never dies, rising from the dead again and again, even after the many losing attempts by First Energy to try to bail out it's old, beyond their engineered safe lifetime, uneconomic nuclear power plants. Some of those attempts have been as Legislative Bills, others appealed to regulatory agencies such as PUCO, FERC, and the PJM grid operator, and First Energy's bailout attempts were rebuffed by all of them as bad policy. House Bill 6 is bad energy policy, bad economic policy, bad environmental policy, and bad government policy all wrapped up in a not very pretty package.

We need a real, open, broad discussion in Ohio about what our energy policies and strategy should be, including economic development. House Bill 6 is not that discussion. In fact it cripples the discussion before it even gets going.

The biggest factor in our energy policies, and in recent times the least mentioned, is global warming caused by human technologies. We, our children, their children, and all other kinds of life on Earth are facing an existential challenge.

We either respond to that challenge effectively and quickly, now, or lose much of what we hold dear through prolonged suffering, death, and societal disintegration. Prior to the current outlaw administration all major US government intelligence agencies and the US military outspokenly said as much. The ultimate effects of letting this dire situation spin out of control are unpredictable yet powerful, very possibly irreversible if we screw around too long. This could and would have been much more easily dealt with had we acted seriously decades ago. We could have. We are now out of time for dithering and delay.

IPCC, the international consortium of climate scientists convened by the United Nations, recently told us we have just 10 or 12 years to put a serious dent in our production of global warming gases, mostly from burning fossil fuels. Otherwise our children and their children face a catastrophic diminishment of Earth's ability to sustain life. That is the real meaning of sustainability. Sustainability is not some passing fad. It is what we must do to meet God's requirement to be stewards, caretakers of our only planet, which sustains us.

House Bill 6 takes away the careful study and vetting done by experts at the PUCO when making policy decisions like this, and hands that decision making power to an under qualified, understaffed, nearly unknown agency operating in the shadows, with little accountability or oversight. The Bill is so undefined, poorly written, that pretty much anything goes. That's the bad government policy aspect.

House Bill 6 effectively annihilates Ohio's middle of the road energy efficiency and renewable energy standards by defunding them. Renewable energy is the wave of the future, where we as a world are going. We have the chance to reverse unintended mistakes of the past by replacing polluting fossil fuels with sun and wind energy resources. Killing those standards makes Ohio again retrograde, refusing to accept the benefits of real progress, and pouring vast amounts of avoidable global warming emissions into our overloaded atmosphere. That's the bad energy policy aspect.

Since 2008 our energy efficiency standards have saved Ohio ratepayers more than 4.5 billion dollars at minimal cost. Energy efficiency is the best of investments, paying off with at least 300% profits, even when we just consider the first couple years of savings from modernized equipment, putting us ahead in the competitive global economy. In fact if we value the efficiency gains from new highly efficient equipment over their full useful lifespan the payoff is at least 700% profit. No other investments of any kind pay that much. Ohio is the nation's leader in producing windpower equipment and in utility scale solar power. Ask First Solar in Toledo, the biggest solar energy producer in the USA, or Timken which makes the giant roller bearings that wind turbines run on. Solar and windpower are the fastest growing segment of the US economy, producing more new good jobs than any other sector. John Kerry, the former Secretary of State, called the renewable energy replacement of fossil fuel power the greatest economic opportunity of this century, one we just can't miss out on. Killing our bipartisan agreed to standards for energy efficiency and renewable energy is the bad economic policy aspect.

In summary, House Bill 6 is bad energy policy, bad economic policy, bad environmental policy, and bad government policy. Please reject this turkey and put it in the trash heap of bad Bills. Let us have the honest, broad reaching, statewide, inclusive discussion of energy and economic policy that our current situation calls for. We should have done that years ago, but it is certainly not too late to do it now. The future is bright with possibilities that enhance our children's lives, rather than damage and detract from them, if we act intelligently and compassionately in choosing the technologies we rely on.

Thank you for your time and attention. Please do the right thing, don't let partisan ideologies get in the way. And certainly don't let a bankrupt, poorly run utility company dictate our lives and damage everyone's economy.

Dave Simons

