



Seneca County Commissioners

Michael Kerschner | Anthony Paradiso | Tyler Shuff

111 Madison St.
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SENATE ENERGY & PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE

Michael Kerschner PROPONENT TESTIMONY

Am. Sub. Senate Bill 52

May 25.2021

Chairman McColley, Vice Chairman Schuring, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Committee, my name is Mike Kerschner and I am a Seneca County Commissioner who made the trip to Columbus once again today on behalf of my county. Seneca County has seen perhaps the most wind development activity in the State of Ohio.

For years now, I have advocated for a path to give citizens a voice in the siting process. Maybe we have finally reached that goal. Maybe it is too late for the people of Seneca County – I hope not. Last week you heard a witness from Huron County ask, “When is enough, enough?” The people of Seneca County are asking that same question.

Over the years we have had local meetings where hundreds of people have pleaded with us to help them but there was nothing we could do. Imagine that. A duly elected member of the Board of County Commissioners – powerless. The pun is intended. You talk about the need to develop more and more power but you do it by taking all the power away from local government.

In previous appearances before you, I asked on whose testimony you should put the most weight. Should it be with the energy companies who will have a positive financial impact? Should it be the leaseholders who will have a positive financial impact? Where is the balance that recognizes legitimate competing interests?

We take the protection of our environment seriously. For example, the fragile karst formation beneath the ground that affects the drainage in our area is known as the Bellevue-Castalia Karst Plain. It contains huge depressions up to 270 acres in size. Shouldn't county government have a say in whether thousands of tons of concrete should be poured into this ground for the base of a wind turbine? Is there a compelling reason to delegate that decision to a developer who stands to make millions? Wouldn't anyone question that?

I am frankly tired of the drumbeat from developers who try to marginalize our interests by saying people just don't like the view. It is insulting and illustrates the low regard many corporate interests have for our community's welfare.

You have an historic opportunity before you today to give some of the power back to the people. Would we like more substantive involvement at the township level? Of course we would. But this is a place to start. I am sure your own constituents would want nothing less.

We are reaching out to the corporate community to ask that you be a partner, not an adversary, in meeting the challenges before us. SB 52 recognizes the need to balance interests and as an elected official, I support this bill as a reasonable step in the right direction.

Sincerely,

Board President Michael J. Kerschner