



Save Ohio Parks

No fracking on public lands

February 26, 2025

Interested Party Testimony – House Bill 15 Ohio House Energy Committee

Chair Holmes, Vice Chair Klopfenstein, Ranking Member Glassburn, and Members of the House Energy Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to give Interested Party testimony on House Bill 15, whose goal is to increase power generation and improve Ohio's electric grid. My name is Cathy Becker, and I am the board president for Save Ohio Parks. We are an all-volunteer citizens group that formed two years ago to educate the public on the health, environmental and climate warming harms of fracking under our beloved state parks and public lands.

HB 15 is a wide-ranging piece of legislation, and as citizens concerned about protecting our public lands, we can only speak to certain parts of the bill. My testimony will cover ending the OVEC and solar subsidies, and three programs we think should be included to make HB 15 a truly comprehensive, fair, and inclusive energy bill.

Legacy Generation Resource Rider and Solar Generation Fund

HB 15 would repeal both the Legacy Generation Resource Rider, through which Ohioans have paid \$670 million to bail out two aging Ohio Valley Electric Corporation (OVEC) coal plants, as well as the Solar Generation Fund, through which Ohioans have paid \$60 million, of which only \$10 million has actually been spent to help build solar plants in Ohio.

As currently written, HB 15 would end the solar subsidies immediately, but not end the coal subsidies until various utility Electric Security Plans – which the bill will also eventually end – run their course. In some cases, this would take several years.

We believe that Ohio should not be playing favorites with energy sources – so if you are going to end one subsidy for a disadvantaged industry immediately, then you should also immediately end the other subsidy for an industry that is far more powerful and polluting.

Further, in both cases the money should be refunded to the citizens of Ohio as soon as the legislation goes into effect. If that is impossible, then the unspent \$50 million in solar subsidies should be used to actually build out solar generation in Ohio, just as the coal subsidies have already gone to the OVEC coal plants.

What's missing from HB 15

Last session saw three very good bills, most with Republican sponsors, that were all allowed to die during lame duck. At that time, we were told they would be covered by major new energy legislation to be introduced in 2025. Yet here is that legislation, and these bills are not part of it. HB 15 would be stronger if they were.

These bills include:

- HB 79, which would set up a voluntary energy efficiency program. The cheapest energy is the energy you never use because energy efficiency programs help you use less. Ohioans saved over \$5 billion on utility bills between 2008 and 2017 due to energy efficiency programs, according to the Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance. Folding HB 79 into HB 15 would bring down the amount of energy needed to be generated, as well as save consumers money.
- HB 275, which would set up a virtual net metering program on distressed lands. Virtual net metering is similar to regular net metering except that the generation facility does not need to be attached to the building it powers. This would encourage businesses to generate their own energy through solar, wind, or another source, increasing both sustainability and grid reliability while saving money.
- HB 197, which would set up a community solar pilot program in Ohio. Again solar projects would be placed on brownfields and distressed sites, in this case to help Ohio residents pay their utility bills while generating clean energy. Many people who can't afford solar on their home, or who can't get solar because they live in an apartment or their roof is not suitable, would buy into a community solar program.

This concludes my testimony on HB 15. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I will try to answer any questions.