

Ohio House Energy Committee
Opponent Testimony to House Bill 15

Robert (Jake) Mitchell, President, Utility Workers Union of America AFL-CIO Local Union No. 430

Chairman Holmes, Vice Chair Klopfenstein, Ranking Member Glassburn, and members of the House Energy Committee:

My name is Robert Mitchell and I serve as President of the Utility Workers Union of America, Local Union No. 430. Our Union represents the hourly employees at the Kyger Creek Generating Station, owned by the Ohio Valley Electric Corporation (OVEC). I am also employed by OVEC as a Senior Electrical Technician at the Kyger Creek Station.

I reside in Bidwell, which is located in Gallia County Ohio. With the exception of living in Athens county during my college years, and a few years living in Columbus after college, I have resided in Gallia county for over 40 years. I am married, with two teenage children. My wife is a guidance counselor at River Valley Middle School in Gallia County, and my children are both heavily involved in athletics at Gallia Academy High School.

I started working for OVEC in 2007. Prior to that I was working in the construction industry. When I got the call from the plant with a job offer I remember feeling like I hit the lottery. To elaborate, almost every young man or woman that grows up in our area dreams of getting a job at the power plant. I could literally see the plant from my classroom window in high school, and hoped I could one day work there. It is one of the few really good paying jobs in our area. I was able to buy my first home, my first new vehicle, and many other things because of the wages OVEC provides. It is a vital part of our local economy.

In addition to the pay and benefits, one of the main reasons I wanted to work for OVEC at Kyger Creek was because my Grandfather worked there. He worked as a concrete mason during construction of the plant, and was then hired by OVEC to work in the operations department at the plant. He retired as a shift supervisor with 37 years of service. To say OVEC has provided for my family for a long time is an understatement. Between my grandfather and myself, my family has 55 years service at the Kyger Creek Plant. There are many employees that are children or grandchildren of former employees here. We refer to ourselves as legacy employees. We take a great deal of pride in working there and feel a sense of ownership that comes with continuing the work that your grandparent or parent started.

In addition to essential grid reliability and sustainability, the economic resources that the plant provides the region are invaluable. There simply isn't anywhere else in southeast Ohio that could replace my job at OVEC. We are an area leader in wages and OVEC offers its employees a very good retirement plan. Most employers do not even offer comparable retiree benefits anymore.

Southeast Ohio relies on Kyger Creek for Economic stability. Ohio needs Kyger Creek for grid sustainability. The citizens of Ohio need Kyger Creek for service reliability.

My coworkers at OVEC and I understand the important role that we play in keeping the units running and making sure our communities have reliable electricity. I want to reiterate that the

Kyger Creek plant has provided us with stable jobs in an organization that we are proud to work for. OVEC has a strong history of supporting our nation's national security by providing power and services to the Department of Energy for over half a century, a fact that we take particular pride in.

House Bill 15 stands to cause instability and uncertainty for the health of our community and the longevity of our good paying jobs at OVEC. Those jobs extend beyond just my colleagues at the Kyger Creek plant in Cheshire and the Piketon Corporate Office to include the many Ohio contractors that support us.

As a private citizen, I am also concerned about what this legislation could do to the tax base that supports our local communities – the schools, the local amenities, and area charities. It has the potential to devastate Southeastern Ohio. The tax revenue this plant generates provides funding for many essential services in our rural area.

Thank you for your consideration of the impact on the counties and people served by OVEC facilities,

Robert “Jake” Mitchell

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