



**Ohio House Natural Resources Committee
The Honorable Monica Robb-Blasdel, Chairwoman
Proponent Testimony
Substitute Senate Bill 219
Claire M. Linkhart | API Ohio
February 18th, 2026**

Chairwoman Robb-Blasdel, Vice Chairman Fischer, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the Ohio House Natural Resources Committee: thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Substitute Senate Bill 219 (S.B. 219).

The American Petroleum Institute-Ohio (API Ohio) is a state affiliate office of the American Petroleum Institute, a national trade association representing all segments of America's oil and natural gas industry. Our approximately 600 members produce, process and distribute most of the nation's energy. API was formed in 1919 as a standards-setting organization and has developed more than 800 standards to enhance operational and environmental safety, efficiency, and sustainability.

S.B. 219 makes critical updates to Ohio oil and gas law, which has not been amended in any meaningful way since the advent of the shale revolution more than a decade ago. Since that time, technological advancements have modernized operations across the industry spectrum, making our member assets safer, more efficient, and cleaner than ever before. Amending our statute to incorporate these developments, where necessary, provides important clarity for both industry and regulators.

While all the provisions in S.B. 219 are notable, I want to focus on the bill's protections against raids on the Oil and Gas Well Fund, which includes revenue used to plug orphaned wells. API applauds these protections, but would ask for the committee to consider the original language in the As-Introduced version of the bill that establishes the Oil and Gas Well Fund as a custodial fund wherein the Treasurer of State is directed to pay out the revenue to the Chief of the Division of Oil and Gas for the purpose of plugging wells. We recognize and appreciate that the current version still aims to protect this funding but maintain that the original language is stronger.

Under current law, the Oil and Gas Well Fund¹ – funded wholly through industry severance tax revenue – includes two line items: one to fund the Division of Oil and Gas' ("Division") core regulatory and oversight functions, and the other to plug idle, orphaned, and abandoned wells. As an organization founded on standards-making, the API holds this fund—focused on protecting public health and safety—paramount to our core mission.

¹ Catalog of Budget Line Items, <https://www.lsc.ohio.gov/assets/organizations/legislative-service-commission/files/2024-catalog-of-budget-line-items-dnr.pdf>

Unfortunately, the Oil and Gas Well Fund has been the subject of budget raids over the past decade for purposes beyond regulating the industry, including settling unrelated lawsuits and proposals to purchase state vehicles. The Ohio natural gas and oil industry has consistently pushed back against these raids, often with the support of the state's leading environmental groups².

A 2022 performance audit of the state's orphan well program³ highlighted the Division's original estimate of 36,000-66,000 orphaned wells statewide, though the total amount is unclear as the existence of these wells predate any sort of regulatory structure in Ohio. However, due in large part to a 2018 law change directing more revenue towards plugging efforts, as well as state programming boosted by federal funding⁴, the number of plugged wells has accelerated in recent years⁵. Still, given both the magnitude and the uncertainty surrounding the true number of orphaned wells in Ohio, it is essential that we keep the fund whole and dedicated to its intended purpose.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony in support of S.B 219. I'd be happy to take any questions at this time.

² "Odd coalition": Greens and oil groups rescue Ohio well-plugging cash," Politico, <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/eenews/2023/06/14/odd-coalition-greens-and-oil-groups-rescue-ohio-well-plugging-cash-00101858>

³ Ohio Department of Natural Resources Orphan Well Program Performance Audit, August 2022. https://ohioauditor.gov/auditsearch/Reports/2022/Ohio_Department_of_Natural_Resources_22_Performance-Franklin_FINAL.pdf

⁴ <https://ohiodnr.gov/discover-and-learn/safety-conservation/about-odnr/oil-gas/orphan-wells/loptp>

⁵ "Ohio's Orphan Well Program has plugged more than 1,200 abandoned wells in last five years," Ohio Capital Journal, <https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2025/08/06/ohios-orphan-well-program-has-plugged-more-than-1200-abandoned-wells-in-last-five-years/>