

Opposition Testimony

Senate Bill 219

DATE: March 15, 2026

TO: Chair Blasdel, Vice Chair Fischer, Ranking Member Rogers

Members of the House Natural Resources Committee.

FROM: Lea Harper, Managing Director, FreshWater Accountability Project

This [commentary published in the Ohio Capital Journal](#) supports our assertions that the Ohio legislature is too friendly to the fossil fuel industry in Ohio despite the expense to the Ohio taxpayer and residents living with the environmental and public health harms of the oil and gas industry, especially fracking and toxic, leaking injection wells:

The Ohio legislature has a long history of kowtowing to oil and gas interests — and no pair of bills demonstrates this more thoroughly than the proposed Ohio Senate Bill 219 and Ohio Senate Bill 294.

Originating in the Senate Energy Committee, whose chair has a past career in the fracking industry, S.B. 219 would speed up the process to frack Ohio state parks and public lands, while SB 294 would further boost oil, gas, and nuclear at the expense of solar and wind energy.

Sponsored by state Sen. Al Landis, R-Dover, with a long list of Republican co-sponsors, [Ohio Senate Bill 219](#) is framed as an overhaul of the law governing oil and gas wells.

In reality, it is 87 pages of favors for the oil and gas industry — starting with speeding up fracking of Ohio's parks and wildlife areas.

If passed, S.B. 219 would:

- Give the Oil and Gas Land Management Commission only 90 days to decide on a nomination to frack public lands; currently they have 180 days.
- Require the commission to put approved nominations out for bid immediately; currently they do that the next calendar quarter.
- Require the commission to select the “highest and best bid” within 60 days; currently there is no deadline.
- Require the state agency that manages the land to execute a lease within 30 days; currently there is no time limit. These leases are more complex than a standard lease due to safeguards that attempt to protect our parks and wildlife areas.

Ohio Senate Bill 219 is also full of provisions that legislators tried to stuff into the state budget last year, but which Gov. DeWine vetoed last June.

These include:

- Prohibiting the Ohio Department of Natural Resources from charging an oil and gas company more than the costs specifically outlined in the lease. Potentially the state could not fine companies that do not follow the rules or make companies pay to clean up after a spill, leak, or accident.
- Giving an oil and gas company the option to extend a lease to frack public land for five additional years instead of three years under existing law.
- Allowing an oil and gas company “surface use” of state land — meaning they could frack IN our state parks and public lands. Currently Gov. DeWine set a rule of “no surface use,” meaning frack wells must be located outside state parks and wildlife areas..
- Giving an oil and gas company that has a lease to frack public lands up to 60 days to pay any advance royalties or bonuses, instead of 10 days under existing law.
- Suspending the time limit on oil and gas leases to frack public land if the land has to go through a federal approval process. Such a process applies to Zepernick and Leesville wildlife areas. Currently these processes are counted against lease time limits.

As if all that is not enough, S.B. 219 would also:

- Curtail the Ohio Department of Natural Resources’ authority to deny requests for expedited review of permit applications. If an oil and gas company requests expedited review, the department would have to grant that for up to 10 permits per year.
- Require the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to prioritize plugging orphan wells located near frack waste injection wells, instead of plugging orphan wells based on how dangerous or polluting they are.
- Eliminate the requirement for a fracking permit applicant to enter into a road use agreement with local governments, instead making these agreements voluntary and expiring after three years.
- Exempt the requirement for a fracking permit holder to obtain a heavy hauling permit, even if the load size or weight of their trucks exceed legal limits.

S.B. 219 has passed the Ohio Senate Energy Committee and Ohio Senate floor, and is now in the Ohio House Natural Resources Committee, chaired by Monica Robb Blasdel.

I do not need to elaborate more than this about the blatantly servile kowtowing to the oil and gas industry in the state by certain lawmakers, mostly Republican. The gig is up – the reputation and even the credibility of the Ohio legislature to offer

It is especially telling and concerning that Ohio’s largest “conservancy” district, the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District would be supportive of this bill. That shows how politically compromised Ohio has become when even a conservancy would support such disastrous legislation exempting the industry from accountability for its harms, fast-tracking its plans and increasing its profits.

The lack of adequate regulation for the oil and gas industry is resulting in sickness and death for those who work within and near the industry:

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/articles/one-dead-incident-industrial-waste-191137864.html>

The growing body of evidence of the harms of fracking can no longer be ignored or downplayed:

<https://psr.org/resources/fracking-compendium-9/>

Who will read these comments that we work so hard to submit? Does it make any difference, or will the Republicans in the Ohio legislature continue to throw their constituents under the fracking bus to serve the fossil fuel industry (which fracking is actually a huge waste industry as well)? Some day there will be a reckoning, and the documentation will show who served the toxic, radioactive industry of fracking, and who served the best interests of Ohioans.

Once the truth comes out – and it always does (unfortunately after much damage is done, the profits have run out, and the LLC’s have dissolved) – there will be a reckoning. Maybe you will consider your own legacy, reputation and conscience before kowtowing to the wishes of the oil and gas industry?