

WRITTEN OPPONENT TESTIMONY

Ohio House Natural Resources Committee

Sub. Senate Bill 219

March 18, 2026

Chair Blasdel, Vice Chair Fischer, Ranking Member Rogers, and Members of the House Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Kat Finneran and I am a resident of Columbus, Ohio. I am writing to express my strong opposition to Sub. Senate Bill 219. As an Ohioan who loves and regularly uses our state parks and wildlife areas, I am deeply troubled by this legislation and urge this committee to reject it.

THIS BILL ACCELERATES FRACKING OF OHIO'S PUBLIC LANDS

S.B. 219 is framed as a routine update to oil and gas law, but it is in reality a sweeping package of favors for the oil and gas industry, one that would dramatically speed up every step of the process to frack Ohio's parks and wildlife areas. The state has already approved over 11,000 acres of public lands for fracking. This bill would make that process faster, easier, and harder to challenge at every turn:

- The Oil and Gas Land Management Commission would have only 90 days to decide on a nomination to frack public lands, cutting the current 180-day review period in half.
- The commission would be required to immediately advertise approved nominations for bid, eliminating the current practice of grouping bids by calendar quarter.
- The commission would be required to select the highest and best bid within 60 days, a new hard deadline where none currently exists.
- The managing state agency would be required to execute a lease within 30 days, removing flexibility to carefully negotiate the complex safeguards these public land leases require.

These arbitrary deadlines subordinate the protection of Ohio's natural heritage to the convenience of the oil and gas industry. Our parks and wildlife areas deserve more careful deliberation, not less.

THIS BILL WOULD ALLOW FRACKING INSIDE STATE PARKS

Among the most alarming provisions is language that would allow "surface use" of state land, meaning oil and gas companies could physically operate fracking rigs inside our state parks and wildlife areas. Governor DeWine established a "no surface use" policy to prevent exactly this outcome. This bill would undo that protection. Ohioans visit our

parks to hike, fish, camp, and connect with nature, not to share those spaces with industrial drilling operations.

THESE PROVISIONS WERE ALREADY VETOED ONCE

Many of the provisions in S.B. 219 are not new, they were inserted into the state budget bill (H.B. 96) last session, only to be vetoed by Governor DeWine in June 2025. The legislature is now attempting to pass them again through a standalone bill. Among the previously vetoed items now re-appearing in S.B. 219:

- Extending oil and gas lease terms on public lands from a three-year extension option to five years.
- Prohibiting ODNR from charging companies for costs beyond those specifically outlined in the lease, potentially preventing the state from recovering cleanup costs after a spill or accident.
- Allowing companies up to 60 days to pay advance royalties or bonuses, up from 10 days under current law.
- Suspending lease time limits when federal approval processes are required, a provision that would directly affect the Zepernick and Leesville wildlife areas.

Governor DeWine vetoed these provisions for good reason. This committee should not circumvent that decision.

THIS BILL WEAKENS OVERSIGHT AND HARMS LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Beyond the direct threats to our parks, S.B. 219 would weaken environmental and public health protections statewide:

- It curtails ODNR's ability to deny expedited permit requests, allowing companies to bypass standard review for up to 10 permits per year as a matter of right.
- It changes orphan well plugging priorities away from public health risk to proximity to injection wells, leaving the most dangerous abandoned wells unplugged longer.
- It makes road use maintenance agreements with local governments voluntary, stripping townships and counties of protections for rural roads damaged by heavy fracking equipment.
- It exempts fracking permit holders from heavy hauling permits, even when their trucks exceed legal weight limits on public roads.

Ohio's state parks and wildlife areas belong to all of us. They are places of recreation, natural beauty, clean water, and wildlife habitat, and once damaged, they cannot be easily restored. S.B. 219 would sacrifice those irreplaceable public resources to the financial interests of the oil and gas industry, while stripping away the oversight tools that protect our communities and environment.

The Governor already said no to many of these provisions. I ask this committee to do the same. Please vote NO on Sub. Senate Bill 219.

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