

OPPONENT TESTIMONY OF Jan Nespor, PhD
SB219 Revise the law governing oil and gas wells
House Natural Resources Committee
March 15, 2026

Chair Blasdel, Vice Chair Fischer, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the Ohio House Natural Resources Committee

My name is Jan Nespor. I am an emeritus professor at OSU, but write here as an individual, representing no organization, to oppose SB219.

This long and multi-faceted bill contains some positive measures, but those are overshadowed by significant shortcomings. Many of the problems are highlighted in other opposition testimony. Here I focus on how SB219 unwisely constricts the time-frame of regulatory oversight.

SB219 would require the Commission to put approved nominations out for bid immediately rather than the next calendar quarter. It would compress the time-frame for decisions on nominations from two quarters (180 days) to 90 days, select the bidder for award within 60 days (currently there is no deadline), and execute and deliver the lease within 30 days (again, there is currently no time limit). It would also constrain review by requiring ODNR to provide expedited review for up to 10 permits per company per year.

These changes echo changes introduced by the current Trump administration to limit time for regulatory oversight – the so-called ‘streamlining’ of review as a step toward deregulation (<https://www.theregreview.org/2025/12/08/speeding-up-the-deregulatory-process/>; <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/issue-brief/whats-in-the-speed-act/>). Following this lead might make sense if ODNR was simply a mechanism for turning land into money at high speed. But faster regulation does not mean better regulation and financial return is not the only metric of relevance. There is also an obligation to oversee land use for future generations. The acceleration of review in SB219 undercuts this function. These leases in question are more complex than standard leases, and the environments involved can be degraded in a few years but may take centuries to recover: bad decisions taken under time pressures have implications that last generations or even much longer.

Finally, there is simply no clear need for this change in regulations. It has proven all too easy under current regulations to open up Ohio’s public lands to oil and gas exploration. Allowing adequate time for deliberation and public input is not a burden. It’s good policy.

I urge you to reject SB219.

Sincerely,
Jan Nespor