



**Ohio Senate Energy Committee
The Honorable Brian Chavez, Chairman**

**Proponent Testimony
Senate Bill 219
Claire M. Linkhart | API Ohio
October 22nd, 2025**

Chairman Chavez, Vice Chairman Landis, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Ohio Senate Energy Committee: thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on 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.

As the sponsor of S.B. 219 articulated last week, 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 to both industry and regulators alike.

While all the provisions in S.B. 219 are notable, I want to focus my attention on the bill's proposed Oil and Gas Remediation fund, which seeks to protect revenue intended to plug orphaned wells from future budget raids. Set up as a custodial fund, 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.

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.

Unfortunately, the Oil and Gas Well Fund has been the subject of budget raids over the past decade for purposes beyond that of regulating industry, including the settlement of unrelated lawsuits and

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

proposals to purchase state vehicles. The Ohio oil and natural gas 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 number is unclear as the drilling of many of these wells predated any sort of regulatory structure in Ohio. 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. However, given both the magnitude and the uncertainty surrounding the true number of orphaned wells in Ohio, it is essential to keep the Oil and Gas Well Fund whole and solely 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/>