



Testimony of Susan Munroe

Van Wert Area Chamber of Commerce, President CEO

Opposition Testimony for Ohio Senate Bill 320

November 29, 2016

Chairman Balderson, Vice Chairwoman Jones, Ranking Member Gentile, and Members of the Ohio Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am here to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 320.

I am also here to let you know that wind energy is great for business in Van Wert County and NW Ohio. As President of the Van Wert Area Chamber of Commerce, I see the economic impacts and ripples from those spinning turbines from Blue Creek Wind Farm on a daily basis. From our local hotels & restaurants to the auto dealers, grocery stores and small businesses, many of our chamber members have benefited from the construction and harvesting of the wind of the Blue Creek Wind Farm. And we look forward to the more than \$1.1 billion in upcoming wind energy investment in our county with Avangrid Renewables and Apex Clean Energy pending stable, reasonable energy portfolio standards returning in 2017 and a change to the current excessive wind turbine setback requirements.

Please don't discourage or take away the best - and only - economic catalyst to come along for NW Ohio in quite some time. You may think you are "just" continuing freeze of the standards, but we don't want to freeze future investment in our county - \$1.1 billion worth.

With its PILOT revenue stream, Avangrid's Blue Creek wind farm is the largest taxpayer in our county. It provides significant money for our schools and local government. Above and beyond the close to \$7million in annual PILOT payments Blue Creek spends more than \$2 million every year for goods and services just with local area businesses- HVAC, road repair, excavating, truck servicing, truck fleet sales, caterers, printers, contractors, scrap metal, concrete- even landscapers. they're infusing more than 2 million on top of the PILOT payments into our business community.

I haven't even mentioned the annual payments to land owners-who now have millions of dollars to reinvest in our local economy.

During construction, Blue Creek generated \$25 million in direct LOCAL spending - actual dollars staying in NW Ohio.

Today, they now have 19 permanent, highly-skilled, highly-paid employees working every day at the wind farm in our community and they are growing jobs for the future for my neighbors, working with the Vantage Career Center technician training program to provide careers and



home grown jobs for our next generation.

And they are good corporate neighbors. Blue Creek's owner, Avangrid Renewables, in addition to the donation to Vantage to train future wind technicians, has established a local scholarship and made donations to Junior Achievement, the Van Wert Historical Society, the Jr. Fair livestock and installation of an electrical system in a new 4-H rabbit barn at the fairgrounds. They recently contributed \$10,000 towards a local Veteran Honor Flight to Washington, DC.

And with all of this economic development so far, consider what could be with two new wind farms in Van Wert County. And just not my county, but Putnam, Seneca, Hardin, Logan Counties and more.

Again, I urge you, please don't take away the most significant economic catalyst for NW Ohio - one that uses our natural wind resource, makes no impact on our land and produces a clean energy resource that helps powers The Ohio State University, 2 upcoming new Amazon facilities in our state, along with thousands of Ohio homes and businesses.

Instability in policy environment is bad for business. Wind companies came to Ohio and to Van Wert County because of 2008's Senate Bill 221. Extending the freeze or turning the standards to "goals" could freeze new investment in our community. We have tasted a very modest amount of success - we don't understand why you would slam the brakes on our economic engine in Northwest Ohio.

And any bill addressing the renewable standards must include a revision of the current wind turbine setback requirements changed in 2014 in by House Bill 483. Those of us who live and work around these windfarms see on a daily basis just how much they contribute to the economic vitality of our communities and our kids. These wind farms were built under the original setback requirements and they operate safely and harmoniously in our backyards – we invite all of you to come and see that for yourselves. Not one of us – nor anyone – was able to comment on the setback change in 2014. We ask you to return to the previous setbacks so that Van Wert County has an opportunity to see additional wind farm development – an opportunity that is currently effectively foreclosed.

Wind energy presents a great opportunity for the Northwest part of the state to contribute to Ohio's electricity generation. Wind is NW Ohio's shale.

I ask that you amend Senate Bill 320 to fully reinstate a reasonable renewable standard effective in 2017 AND to return to the original setback requirements under which our wind farms were built. The \$1.1 billion in wind farm expansion in our county is at stake. Wind is a lucrative, sustainable "crop" for our farmers and entire community. We hope to continue to harvest wind to not only build economic prosperity for our county but provide sustainable, renewable energy for our state.

I appreciate your time and consideration today. I welcome any questions the committee may have.