

## **Testimony of Jeff Thomas**

***Lincoln Ridge Farms, owner***

### 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.

My name is Jeff Thomas from Lincoln Ridge Farms, established in 1919 in Van Wert County. I am a 5<sup>th</sup> generation operator of our family farm, soon to become a Century farm. We have established a farm market and agri-entertainment venue at our farm. In 2017 we will celebrate our 30<sup>th</sup> year for our 'Fall Mums and Pumpkin Festival.'

We are a part of the Blue Creek wind farm and have leased our farm to Avangrid Renewables. We have an access lane on our farm to #20 wind turbine, adjacent to our farm and share a bridge across North Creek. We call the wind turbine our 'gentle giant'. We walk out our door and are privy to the view of over 80 turbines. We certainly have much experience living and working near a wind farm.

I was impressed with the entire pre-construction process both by Iberdrola/Avangrid and the siting board, looking out for the best interests of the community and the landowner. Previous acceptable setbacks were further increased by Iberdrola/Avangrid before presenting a plan to the citing board. Our developer, Iberdrola/Avangrid Renewables acted in good faith. With experience, I see no reason to change those standards. But I am confused. I am confused by the fact that as a participating small family farm in the Blue Creek wind farm of Van Wert County, and having not experienced anything but good with our partnership with Iberdrola/Avangrid, and then watch a few try to stop the progress we have experienced at our farm, in our county, in our state, and in our country. With the passage of Senate Bill 320, all of us know that the construction of new wind energy projects will end in the foreseeable future. Is that what we want, at a time when some leaders are changing their position on climate change? Renewable energy will certainly be a part of the solution! And again, you are hearing from one that has experienced nothing but good from our wind farm in Van Wert County.

Several years ago, we had the privilege of hosting four busloads of students and officials from Ohio State University. As you may know, OSU signed an agreement to purchase 30% of their estimated electricity usage from the Blue Creek Wind Farm giving them stability of their energy costs. At the same time, OSU created a new renewables energy course. Some students in attendance commented on the absence of noise from #20 wind turbine and noticeable constant noise from traffic on US Route 30. OSU's enthusiastic commitment to renewable energy is substantial and notable. Why would anyone propose to stop this enthusiasm and support?

As we plan to pass our farm/small business to our children and grandchildren - who by the way are already involved and dedicated to the future of our farm, please don't turn your back on the progress we have seen at our farm, in our community and in our state.

I welcome any questions the committee may have.

Jeff Thomas