

I write in opposition to S. B. 33, because criminal trespass is already illegal (R. C. 2911.21), but S. B. 33 is part of a nationwide effort for oil and gas industries to attack the free speech rights of nonviolent protesters, by dramatically raising penalties and threatening supporters. While general criminal trespass committed “on the land or premises of another” is a fourth-degree misdemeanor punishable by up to 30 days in jail and a \$250 fine, the bill would make the same offense punishable by six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine if the offense occurs at a critical infrastructure facility. This bill also intends to intimidate organizations, by assessing them a fine ten times the fine for the level of crime of an individual. According to R. C. 2901.23, an organization is not just a corporation or other legal entity, but also an “unincorporated nonprofit association.” Standing up for freedom means protecting free speech, even of people with whom you disagree.

Why are you considering this bill? Trespassing is already illegal, and sabotage certainly would be. After 9/11, do you really think that someone intentionally causing permanent damage wouldn't be subject to some really serious charges?

The real harm, to which the legislature should be paying attention, is the operation of the oil and gas industry itself, with damage to the health and environment of people living near fracking wells having already been publicized. Here are two recent items of more effects:

“A 2018 explosion at a natural gas well owned by an ExxonMobil subsidiary [at a Belmont County fracking site] emitted more methane into the atmosphere than some countries do in a year, a new study using satellite data has found.” <https://www.axios.com/satellite-uncovers-ohio-gas-blast-huge-methane-leak-0d42c47a-5711-47ea-bb96-de67a47ebc5c.html>

An article to be published in the Feb. 2020 RollingStone discusses that drivers of frack brine are exposed to significant radioactivity and are suffering health effects, and that spills of frack brine in traffic accidents may endanger water supplies, and also the people living near the spills. <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/oil-gas-fracking-radioactive-investigation-937389/>

People should have the right to stand up for their own air, water, and soil. When their legislature and government agencies are not protecting them, they need to protest. If you stand for our rights, you need to oppose S. B. 33, and stand for greater oversight of the fracking industry and other polluting industries.