

SB 33 Testimony  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
Columbus, Ohio  
April 22, 2019

**Position: Opposed**

Dear Chairman Eklund and Members of the Committee;

I am writing to express my opposition to SB 33. I feel that this bill will be unjust to citizens who are trying to express and exercise their First Amendment Rights. This will be used to intimidate residents who are finding it significantly harder to express their opinions about their fears pertaining to oil and gas expansion into their communities.

I would like to share a personal story. Early in 1997, my husband and I, along with thirty-one other individuals, had a SLAPP suit (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) filed against us. The company was then called Waste Technologies INC. in East Liverpool, Ohio and owned by Von Roll, a foreign entity. The suit of course claimed libel but it was just a smoke screen to draw attention away from the fact that this toxic waste incinerator, the largest of its kind in the world, had not passed its trial burn and proved it could destroy wastes to its reported 99.999 percent efficiency.

The case continued for nearly three years and each individual was being sued for one million dollars (a total of 33 million dollars). We had this cloud hang over our family during the same time as my father was fighting skin cancer and my mother was fighting colon cancer. Ironically, I became vocal in local newspapers because of the cancer incidence in our region and the fear of what health issues might occur. The incinerator was dumping 4.1 tons of lead a year on our valley.

We saw this case for what it was: a way to quell public outcries about the incinerator. The case was eventually suspended. However, once again, our family and the rest of Ohio's citizens find themselves in a place of trying to protect their communities from environmental harm. This time that harm comes from the explosion of oil and gas development and the entire infrastructure that comes with that development.

As a long time environmental activist, I have learned that the cards are stacked against local opposition. So tell me please, how do poor, disenfranchised citizens respond to these threats? Free speech is still our biggest hope to speak truth to power. SB 33 will cripple that last best hope to try and save our communities from often outside interests seeking to use us as mineral colonies.

For this reason, I urge you to oppose SB 33.

Respectfully,  
Randi Pokladnik, Ph.D. Environmental Studies, Mother and grandmother  
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