

30 April 2019

Judiciary Committee
Ohio Senate
Columbus, Ohio

Dear Senate Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to voice my opposition to SB 33, the bill that seeks to modify criminal penalties for damage to so-called critical infrastructure. This bill amounts to a solution in search of a problem. It accomplishes little that cannot be done with current laws dealing with trespass and vandalism. It does increase penalties for certain acts from misdemeanors to felonies, presumably to discourage anyone thinking about damaging critical infrastructure. However, there has been no change in trespassing or vandalism statewide that would merit these changes in penalties. The bill would also impose harsh fines on organizations "complicit" in trespass or damage to critical infrastructure. Organizations that might sponsor protests against certain industries, e.g. gas pipeline companies, could find themselves charged for complicity in actions they do not endorse or control. The bill opens the door to provocateurs who intentionally engage in trespass or vandalism in order to harm organizations sponsoring protests. The entire bill seems to be designed to suppress protest in order to protect the interests of corporations, especially oil companies, who own critical infrastructure. As such, the bill violates the First Amendment rights of Ohioans and will stamp Ohio as a state that is hostile to upholding constitutionally guaranteed civil rights.

I urge the Judiciary Committee to reject this bill and demonstrate support for the First Amendment. The bill is antithetical to American values and is not the Ohio way.

Sincerely,



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