

Testimony of Michael Lutmer

My name is Mike Lutmer and I own a farm in Highland County at 4120 Sharpsville Rd Hillsboro, Ohio. SB 52 Substitute Bill proposes to restrict my land use without reason and I don't like the politics of this bill. SB 52 does not consider my best interests, it simply takes my decision making for my farm interests and hands it over to the government.

As a farmer, I take on all the risk brought by mother nature. Diversification into a solar project represents a unique opportunity to supplement my volatile farming income with an income stream that is fixed over the life of the project. This is simply a good business practice.

This policy is a very slippery slope. Allowing local commissioners to hold up millions of dollars in investment until the next election is not a policy, it's a political statement. I would not have expected to see this body or any Ohio elected official treat renewable energy so hostile. Imagine if the oil and gas folks had to operate under these circumstances, we would have gas shortages.

This system places a lot of power into a few local commissioners; the power to take away millions of dollars in investment with a vote. This will transfer the "money in politics" problem the state house has seen in recent years connected to nuclear and transfer it to our local officials.

Why do other people get to decide what I can or cannot do with my land. If I want to farm solar it seems like everyone cares, but if I create the world's largest hog farm no one cares? The property rights referred to in SB 52 belong to the person who writes the mortgage check

Improve the current process that thoroughly investigates the challenges and arrive at a conclusion that's based upon facts and comprise by the impacted parties – not an entire County. There are so many northern Ohioans weighing in on projects in Southern Ohio through Facebook Opposition groups that its hard to tell what side is up with solar farms. SB 52 feels more like a political battle between energy sources and their paid hacks than a land use effort. Please stop putting the government where the government does not belong. This is about my land and my choices on what I do with my land are at stake.

If you are intent on making the wrong decision and decide to move ahead with this flawed policy, please ensure that projects are allowed to proceed through the Ohio Power Siting Board process and are not stalled while we wait for the next primary or general election which could be nearly 18 months. Don't add insult to injury by freezing the permitting process while we wait for a referendum vote on the ballot. Give the property owner the same right to be at the ballot to overturn a referendum, and also have the project ready to build when the voters chose property rights over nanny government.

If you must move ahead with this flawed policy, here's a suggestion for an amendment:

Qualified projects shall be provided the opportunity to proceed through the OPSB process while a referendum is initiated. OPSB shall proceed without prejudice with the permitting of qualified projects.

But rather than fix a bad policy, please vote no on SB 52 and its new provisions. Preserve my rights to determine how my property will be used and my financial future will play out. As elected officials, your job is to bring economic security and opportunity to Ohio. With data centers and tech companies coming to Ohio to locate and power their facilities with green energy, you should be laying out the welcome mat, not chasing big corporations away by backwards policies.