

SB 52
PROPONENT TESTIMONY
WALT POFFENBAUGH
HURON COUNTY, OHIO
JUNE 24, 2021

I am writing to support SB52. This bill will help Ohioans correct a grievous error which has been committed regarding siting industrial scale wind turbine or solar projects in our state.

The citizens of Ohio deserve “local control” of industrial-scale wind and solar projects. When the Ohio Power Siting Board was formed 49 years ago, I doubt anyone was thinking of wind turbines which are 15 stories taller than the Riffe Tower, setting on nearly every square mile of land in portions of five counties, stretching from Bucyrus to the Ohio Turnpike

Under current Ohio law, wind turbine and solar projects under a certain output rating are controlled by local zoning regulations at the county or township level. When an individual or business wants to install a wind turbine or solar field, they seek approval from the local zoning board responsible for their community. The boards are comprised of local people, deciding local issues, giving local control.

The problem, as I see it, is the process currently used in Ohio for industrial scale wind turbine and solar projects. All decisions regarding the siting, construction, and operation of these facilities fall under the authority of the Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB). There is no local control. Citizens in project areas covering hundreds of square miles don’t have a meaningful vote on something which will turn their rural agricultural/residential area into a heavy industrial zone for the next generation. There is no local control.

I became acutely aware of this system in late May 2018 when my wife and I attended a public information meeting in Attica, Ohio. This informational meeting was not sponsored by any of the wind developers or government agencies involved in the approval process for any of the three projects proposed at that time for our area at the Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB).

I am one of the many people who have an open mind about renewable energy. Like many others, I only ever heard the positive arguments for wind energy constantly regurgitated by the wind developers, government officials and the news media. The same talking points; save the planet, hundreds of jobs, and millions in tax revenue. It all sounds so wonderful until you start researching the facts. I hadn’t heard the other side. As a retired law enforcement officer, I know full well there are two sides to every story, and I’ve spent the majority of my adult life

investigating a variety of situations, considering all sides and the weight of the evidence before making a decision about anything.

After hearing some of the negative impacts of the proposed wind projects at the meeting my wife and I attended, I made a personal visit to the APEX office in Bellevue, Ohio to find out how and why I was not informed about a project which directly impacted me, a project which had been in the planning stages for 10 years. The APEX representative indicated that since my six acres was not large enough for them to seek a lease with me, I didn't matter to them. The impression I got from this visit was my wife and I didn't matter.

I have spent hundreds of hours reading the thousands of pages of information submitted to the Ohio Power Siting Board by the wind developers. This information includes the alleged subject matter expert studies done and used to support the wind developer's assertions that there is no danger from the wind turbines or any danger is minimal. I have come to the conclusion that the data is skewed. It is manipulated to give the favorable result desired by those wishing to construct wind turbines.

I have travelled to Columbus many times since 2019 to witness or participate in forums related to renewable energy. I have testified in hearings involving consideration of HB 6, HB401 and SB 234 in the 133rd Ohio General Assembly and HB118 and SB52 in the 134th General Assembly. I attended a Blade Shear Workshop at the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) and provided written input to the PUCO, was a panelist at a Rule Change workshop at the Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB), presented testimony at Public and Adjudicatory Hearings held by the OPSB involving the Seneca Wind, Republic Wind and Emerson Creek Wind projects. I have also presented testimony during county-level considerations of Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) proposals in Erie and Huron Counties.

The reasons we need a local referendum as allowed by SB52, permitting the wishes of the majority of local citizens to be heard include:

- Wind developers are not required to announce their plans for an area until after they have secured lease agreements with local landowners in sufficient numbers to allow construction of the proposed project. These lease agreements contain a non-disclosure agreement, prohibiting the lessee from communicating any negative information about the project. In the case involving my immediate area, these leases were procured with little to no general public knowledge up to 10 years before the wind developer filed the project application with the OPSB in early 2019.
- The short timeline established by the OPSB after the project is applied for does not give local residents the ability to adequately review the voluminous support material

submitted with the application. This review is necessary to verify the accuracy of the information. Local residents are at the mercy of OPSB staff to critically examine the support material before making their recommendations to the board regarding the project. In staff reports reviewed by me, the staff appears to consistently take the wind developer at their word and accept the developer's data for mitigation procedures for any problems discovered. This is done despite expert testimony submitted by local residents to the OPSB staff with conclusions which are totally opposite of the conclusions from the wind developer's experts.

- Local residents, who wish to challenge the accuracy of information submitted by the developer, are forced to secure legal counsel at considerable expense. In the two adjudicatory hearings I have witnessed, it appeared as though the local intervenors had two adversaries, the developer and the OPSB.

Wind and solar projects are unlike any other energy project regarding the size and scope of the difficulties they impose on an area. Those of us who live in the footprint of the proposed Emerson Creek Wind, Republic Wind and as yet applied for Honey Creek Wind project areas, have legitimate concerns about how these wind projects will affect our roads and bridges, our bird and bat population, our groundwater from disruption and destruction of the KARST, our health from infra-sound effects, and our finances from depreciation of property values and the peaceful country life we sought when we decided to live in the country.

We have researched the problems industrial wind turbines have caused in other areas of the world and in other states across our nation. We have access to evidence of what other countries, states, and communities have done to deal with these problems. We can learn from the mistakes made by other well-intentioned, but ill-informed legislators and government officials.

The renewable energy industry consistently claims the majority of people support green energy. If that is truly the case, they should have no problems with citizens having a vote. They should be leading the charge in support of SB52. I fail to understand how any elected official could be opposed to giving the citizens they represent a vote on matters which affect them in so many different aspects of their lives.

I believe that a close examination of the process shows that all residents, especially those most impacted, are not included in the process until late in the game, and the current process of the OPSB provides an unfair advantage to the renewable developers at the expense of the vast majority of residents in the area.

Please give us a vote, and support SB52.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Walt Poffenbaugh". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and legible.

Walt Poffenbaugh
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Willard, Ohio 44890

Huron County-Norwich Township