

**Kreg Culler**  
**Defiance County**  
**Opponent Testimony – Senate Bill 52**  
**Senate Energy and Utilities Committee**  
**March 23, 2021**

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Ohio Senate Energy and Utilities Committee, my name is Kreg Culler and I greatly appreciate the opportunity to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 52. As you know from previous committee hearings, this bill establishes a referendum process at the township level for all wind and solar projects. I know that you have a full committee agenda, and I appreciate your attention to my testimony.

I represent fourth generation family ownership in land in Defiance County. My family “invested” in land 120 years ago as a “means” of making a living. My great grandfather and grandfather cleared the trees off of much of that land in order to farm it. They owned the land. No one told them that they could not do that. My grandfather sold the gas and oil rights on that land back in the 50’s. He owned the land. No one told him he could not do that. In the 60’s, we transitioned from corn and wheat to soybeans because it was a better “cash” crop. Then in the 80’s, my father put the entire farm into the federal CRP program and thus ended the family farming operation. He owned the land. No one told him he could not do that. Over the last 25 years, we have cash rented the land to a local farmer in an effort to make a return on our family investment. We own the land. No one is telling us we can’t do that.

As a property owner, and now a solar lease holder, in Defiance county, I have serious concerns about this legislation as it turns business decisions I make into local political decisions. Additionally, bills like Senate Bill 52 jeopardize my ability as a property owner to utilize my land to develop a solar energy project. This legislation is adding uncertainty to an already cumbersome process, and it will have an adverse impact on economic development in our state.

I appreciate the concerns shared by the proponents of this bill. I respect their opinion and their right to come before you as they previously have and express their support for the bill. But in complete fairness, what trees I choose to clear, what crops I choose to grow, or who I choose to rent my land to is strictly my business - especially when it does not affect them. I understand concerns raised about wind energy, but when it comes to solar energy why should someone who lives on the other end of the township have a voting right over how I use my land? Giving a local referendum option to the local township is politicizing “my” business decisions . . . business decisions that “I” make in the best interests of “my” family and will only serve to further pit neighbor against neighbor in small communities like mine.

Senate Bill 52 would set a very dangerous precedent for our State by giving locals “more than a voice” in how someone utilizes their property. In NW Ohio, mega-farms have created far greater concerns over the last decade than any solar project ever will. Those concerns have fallen on deaf ears for the most part. If you pass this proposed legislation, you will have “neighbors” who are concerned with ground water contamination, depletion of the water table, air quality issues and the like camped out on your doorstep insisting on the same kind of control over these other controversial businesses. I urge you not to open that Pandora’s box.

If this bill is about local control, no one appreciates that more than me! While the intention may be good, the methodology needs some work. Either a township is open for renewable energy business, or it’s not. Voting on solar projects “after” much time and money has been invested is counterproductive to good business and healthy economic development.

In regards to the Ohio Power Siting Board process, it is my understanding that this committee has received testimony that there are very few opportunities for public input in the power siting board process. As I’ve come to understand, the Ohio Power Siting Board does indeed provide opportunities for any individual to participate in that process without the need for an attorney. The individuals who comprise this Board are not just bureaucrats, but people with extensive technical and policy experience in all things related to the environmental, agricultural and even political aspects of the development of energy infrastructure.

Finally, I want to thank you, and the members of the committee, for your time and for your attention here today. I respectfully urge you to oppose Senate Bill 52, and I am happy to answer any questions you might have regarding my remarks.

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