

Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee

Opponent Testimony: Senate Bill 52 – Revise law governing wind farms and solar facilities

Tuesday, March 23, 2021

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Schuring, ranking member Williams, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 52. For the record, my name is Mike Wortham, and I am the Manager of Government Affairs for bp America.

As you know, the energy industry is changing faster than ever. Global demand for energy continues to here in Ohio and around the world.

Last year, bp announced its ambition to become a net zero carbon emissions company by 2050 - or sooner, and to help the world get there, too. We plan to dramatically reduce carbon in our operations and in our production, and grow new low carbon businesses, products and services.

Companies like bp can, and must, play a leading role in bringing about a lower carbon future. Effective government policy is essential to realizing that reality.

The energy transition is well underway and renewables, including wind, solar and biofuels are increasingly becoming an important part of the energy mix. As business and consumer demand for renewables grow – industry will respond.

This is why bp is concerned about the precedent and message of Senate Bill 52.

The State of Ohio has one of the most robust and thorough siting processes in the United States. The Ohio Project Siting Board (OPSB) allows experts to use their area of specialization to review all aspects of the project from environmental features to architectural history - and everything in between. This process allows for highly considered and expert project designs that ensure projects will be suitable and beneficial for both the state and local communities.

Most importantly, there are substantial requirements for public engagement for neighboring communities embedded in the process. Engaging in this way provides a means of navigating many of the complex concerns that are critical to local communities and the public. The siting and permitting process implemented by the OPSB must continue to be robust, transparent, and predictable.

The modifications to the current permitting process proposed in Senate Bill 52 significantly increase risk and uncertainty for large capital investment energy projects. We believe, the continuation of the bill, towards passage, could delay and hinder the growth and development of industry and the low carbon economy in Ohio.

For over a century, our Toledo refinery has played an important role in the strength of the northern Ohio economy. We provide jobs and economic security for thousands of people; in some cases, two or three generations of families have made their careers at the refinery. With clean energy technologies advancing and growing, bp looks forward to our continued operations in the the State of Ohio.