

Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
Senate Bill 52
Opposition Testimony
March 23, 2021

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Schuring, and Ranking Member Williams, thank you for the opportunity to submit opposition testimony on Senate Bill 52.

My name is Sam Borst and I have lived in southern Preble County since 1981. I grew up in a farming community and then I bought 30 acres. I went to law school at University of Cincinnati and I am the former city prosecutor in Hamilton, Ohio, and continue to practice family and criminal law. I have been practicing for 30 years.

I am submitting testimony today because I have land in a solar project and I was shocked to learn that members of the General Assembly were trying to take away my rights to use my land under the current rules and laws afforded to me by the State of Ohio.

I *live* on the farm property, unlike many of the people who want to complain, that either aren't directly affected, don't own a farm, or have developed their former farm property in the way they saw fit, including developing it into residential real estate. I didn't complain when they developed their property in the way they saw fit, because it wasn't my place to do so. You don't seem to see any of the farmers in the project complaining about the use of *their* property at all. Unlike many of the people that complain, my property, which was always a combined conservation project with CRP Prairie Grass for Wildlife Cover, and crops, will *STAY* a farm, with twice as much CRP Prairie Grass on it as before, preserving the soil and providing benefits to wildlife. Unlike *all* of the people who complain, I have an *actual* property and monetary investment in the Project. Almost *all* of the people who complain *don't* live adjacent the project, and wouldn't even see it in their travels, in other words, they have *no* standing.

One of the reasons I didn't complain, is because I knew that I was moving to one of the most developed areas of Preble County, when I moved here in 2005. Lakengren gated community is and was then one of, if not the, largest developed subdivisions of residential real estate in Preble County. You will notice that some of the addresses on the Petition to Intervene are located in Lakengren. When I was Chief Ranger at Hueston Woods State Park in 1981-1986, I saw that Lakengren at that time was comprised of camping trailers mostly, not homes. It has been developed in that 30 plus year period into a subdivision with \$400,000 homes in it.

I also knew when I moved back to Preble County in 2005, that I was only 2.5 miles from the Corporation limit of the City of Eaton, which I also expected would grow and expand.

The Alamo Solar Project is merely part of expected progress, that almost all of the farmers in the Project area saw coming, as well as those who bought residential real estate in a

combined residential/farm area should have expected. They have been part of that development, so to attempt to stand in the way of farmers attempting to farm their ground in a progressive, "green energy" way, just makes them stand out like sore thumbs as big hypocrites, when we didn't stand in the way of them developing their land to their benefit.

For me, I intend to retire in Preble County. I like the quiet outdoors, and low traffic on the roads near me. Those things won't change once construction is finished. For those that don't want to see the project, conifer buffers will make it impossible to see it to complain. The solar panels stand approximately 10 feet tall at their peak, much like corn does presently when it is mature.

You will see that many of the farmers in the project are up in years, retirement age, or close, whose kids don't intend to farm themselves. This project gives them a chance to supplement income, possibly afford to retire, keep their farmland intact, replenish topsoil, and pass it on to the next generation. These actions may very well deter those who might try to develop it into residential real estate instead.

I fully support solar farms, and am looking forward to the money it will generate for the individual Preble County residents who signed on, the millions in tax dollars generated which will go to a poor county, and for the visible benefits to the schools, roads, first responder programs, that a small portion of the complainers will also enjoy.

Our country has been talking for 40-50 years about doing more for renewable energy. We only want what is best for our kids. I am a single dad with one son who was a college football player and now in the military. My son scored the highest in the nation on the combat fitness test. He received the Iron Warrior Award. I am really proud of my son and want to leave him this legacy.

Thanks for the opportunity to offer my first-hand experience of working with a solar company. Please take solar out of this bill. Please oppose Senate Bill 52 and House Bill 118.