

March 23

**Public Utilities Committee SB 52 Testimony
Squire Galbreath.**

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Chair Williams, and Members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee,

My name is Squire Galbreath and I appreciate the opportunity to address the committee today and voice my opposition to SB 52.

Background:

Like many residents who are speaking today, this bill is personal for me. My grandfather, John Galbreath, bought the beginnings of Darby Dan farm in Franklin County in 1935 and I am proud to call Franklin County home to this day.

Over the years, developers have approached my family and I to sell our land for commercial use, but we did not want to see it developed into a shopping center or a mall. Such development would have a negative impact on my neighbors, the community and the Battelle Darby Creek, also known as Big Darby.

Big Darby:

Big Darby is a nature preserve with over 7,000 acres of forest and an abundance of wildlife. Much effort has gone into preserving this park and residents agree that it must be protected. The wrong development could negatively impact the watershed and other elements of the park. That is why I wanted to listen when Invenergy approached me about leasing my land for their Pleasant Prairie Solar Energy Center.

After learning more about the project and all of the positive benefits it would have on Big Darby and the local economy, I was convinced that leasing my land for solar was the right decision for my family *and* the community.

My family and I have a long history of environmental stewardship in Franklin County. In 2003, we sold a portion of land to the Metro Parks and made a sizeable donation of land as a part of the total 1,000 acre transfer. We care greatly for the land and take into consideration the environmental impact of any changes on or near the land. We made the conscious decision to pass the land along to other good stewards of the environment.

Invenergy has gone above and beyond the OPSB requirements to ensure the Big Darby is not negatively impacted by the project. They have committed to a native vegetative management plan that would improve the stormwater drainage and downstream stormwater quality. To put it simply, Pleasant Prairie Solar will prevent runoff and

pollutants into Big Darby Creek that would be there if the land was developed for any other use. It will preserve the land and allow future generations to enjoy it. Also, once the life of the project is done, the land is restored back to its original use. What other developments can you say that about?

Opposition to SB 52:

Since 1954, my family has owned this land and like any property owner, we are proud to own land that can stay in our family for generations to come. Unfortunately, this bill is blatantly stripping away my rights as a property owner. If you vote yes on this bill, you would be placing the future of my family and my land in the hands of my neighbors.

Early on in the process of leasing my land, I learned about the OPSB and the role they would play in citing the project. From what I have learned, the OPSB has one of the most rigorous applications in the country and requires more tests and studies than most states. I applaud the OPSB and their commitment to looking out for the best interest of Ohio residents. With that being said, there is NO need for an additional arm of government for citing solar projects in the state. This bill benefits big government and neglects the rights of landowners.

The notion that this bill is for “local control” is hypocritical. It is stripping the local control that property owners have, and it places it in the hands of some neighbors and trustees, who can stop me from leasing my land for no reason other than they don’t like solar. Imagine being told that you couldn’t lease your land simply because your neighbors don’t like your plans for it. I believe this law has the potential to be a slippery slope – even if I have a right as a property owner to use my land as needed – I don’t think it’s right for my neighbors to be able to overturn my decision for my land without merit. I should have the right to do with my land what I believe is correct assuming the use is not harmful or disturbing the environment. We trust that the full-time staff members at OPSB have the expertise, experience and level of sophistication to evaluate the impact of these projects in Ohio. We respect our part time township trustees enough to know they do not need the added weight of these sizable decisions on their shoulders.

I encourage you to vote NO on SB 52. If you care about the rights of property owners- you will vote NO. If you care about the Ohio economy and keeping jobs in our state- you will vote NO. If you care about the landowners across Ohio that are making the best decisions for their family- you will vote NO.

Thank you for your time.

