

Members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee

Re: SB 52, Revise law governing wind farms and solar facilities

I urge you to oppose SB 52 which is designed to make it harder for renewable energy projects to be built in Ohio. This bill is bad policy. It adds a new layer of regulation that would have a chilling effect on the construction of renewable energy projects. The Ohio Siting Board currently has many solar projects that are in the application and pre-application stage. These projects will bring new jobs, investment, income for landowners, money for schools and communities and add important sources of clean energy. All, at a time when the demand for clean energy is growing.

The Ohio Siting Board already has in place a rigorous application process. Companies seeking to build a commercial solar facility in Ohio are already investing a great deal of time and money while working with Power Siting Board staff to insure that the public's interests are met. The process includes a legally binding joint stipulation between the company and Board staff that precedes Board approval. This joint stipulation addresses in granular detail issues regarding the environment, animal protection, water runoff, aesthetics, glare, ground tiles, view shed visibility, historical preservation, among other issues. The call for more regulation is just a smokescreen. It is a brazen attempt to disallow property owners to use their land as they see fit.

I am a retired teacher. I lived through a time when technology, especially computers, entered the classroom. Classroom technology is expensive. The rural school districts that would benefit financially from these new solar farms are frequently underfunded. The new revenue for schools would, among other things, allow for school districts to expand the range of technologies that they can provide for their students. That would be a big deal, and it would allow those districts to improve the education they provide for their students.

Ohio businesses and Ohio citizens want clean energy. If the solar projects on the Ohio Power Siting Board list are allowed to go forward, it will be a big step toward meeting that demand. Township by township referenda would add an element of uncertainty that would make it impossible for companies to secure financing. It would be the end of an important source of new business for our state. I urge you to oppose SB 52.

Stephen Ploetz

Anderson Township, Ohio