

SENATE ENERGY AND PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE
May 19, 2021
ROBERT and BARBARA BEHLING
PROPONENT TESTIMONY Senate Bill 52

Chairman McColley, Vice Chairman Schuring, Ranking Member Williams,
Committee Members,

We are submitting this written testimony in support of substitute Senate Bill 52 which allows townships an up-front declaration on whether they would welcome or reject an industrial wind and/or solar facility in their neighborhood.

This bill is a win-win for project developers and for Ohio residents. The developers win by focusing their time and money only in areas where they know they will encounter no local opposition to their proposed project. Ohio residents win by regaining the authority over what they historically always had (i.e. local zoning).

Developers would present to the OPSB only projects located in a locally approved Energy Development District. Then the OPSB process would follow its usual rules. This will expedite the OPSB process because delays due to local opposition to the project are negligible.

Unlike other electric generation plants such as oil and gas, each industrial solar/ wind facility consumes massive acres of productive Ohio farmland; therefore, they are a much greater impact to the local residents.

The following addresses some of the opposition comments to this bill :

1. Would inhibit diversification in Ohio energy
This bill does not stop renewable energy facilities from being built in the state. They will still be built where wanted but not forced into areas where they are not wanted.
2. Local control is not in the best interest of the state
The primary interest of the state should be its people. The state does not exist for its own interest. It should not be allowed to override legitimate concerns about the placement of large industrial electrical facilities.

3. OPSB process currently allows for local input

However, the current local input process carries little weight. Yes, county commissioners can try to discourage projects by denying the PILOT. But, as in Logan county, denial of the PILOT did not stop an industrial wind facility from being built.

Also local residents can oppose proposed projects via testimonies and on-line comments. But in our experience the OPSB seems to see legitimate local concerns about a project as just NIMBY statements while taking developer data/information at face value. The current process for local input does not work for local residents. The creation of Energy Development Districts will work for everyone.

4. Other states do not have local land use

This is false. According to the National Conference of States Legislatures, out of all 50 states, less than 10 have total control over both the approval and the siting decisions for renewable facilities. In the remaining 40+ states, either all the decisions, or at a minimum the siting decisions, are retained at the county/township level. Clearly, Ohio is in the minority by denying affected residents some say in whether to accept an industrial renewable facility.

We urge you to support substitute Senate Bill 52 which benefits both developers and communities.

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