

Dave Belton  
Shawnee Township Trustee  
May 19, 2021

Senate Bill 52- Proponent Testimony Ohio Senate Public Utilities Committee

Chairman McColley, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Williams, and Members of the Ohio Senate Public Utilities Committee. My name is Dave Belton and I've served as a Shawnee Township Trustee since January 2010. I'm a 58-year resident of Shawnee Township and served on the Fire Department before retiring as Fire Chief in 2003. I have contributed over 48 years of public service to our community. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 52.

Shawnee Township residents and trustees have experienced first-hand the current lack of local control and transparency when it comes to a solar development wishing to location in the area. I was contacted by phone in September of 2020 by the Lima-Allen County Economic Development Group that there was word of a large industrial project looking at Shawnee Township. He said there would be over a thousand jobs and sustainability for many years to come. This seemed to be a very exciting prospect and it was not until the project was much further along in the development stage that the community learned it would be a large industrial solar farm. In fact, the day property owners received letters setting out the most basic details of the project, the Ohio Power Siting Board received a request from the developer to hold the informational meetings related to their application online.

At a meeting with Lightsource/BP presented at Apollo Career Center the trustees and residents learned that the jobs and economic development being touted were not exactly as promised. I was told that hotels and restaurants would have to be built to accommodate 1400+ workers. In further questions, we learned that there would be 5-10 permanent jobs after construction was finished. Naturally, our residents and businesses have since begun to raise questions about property values, proximity to existing homes, loss of farmland, chemical run off, and a myriad of other concerns.

To say there has been public outcry would be an understatement. As a township trustee I am accountable to these constituents and have heard their vocal feedback first-hand. I support Substitute Senate Bill 52 as its provisions would return control for these decisions to the unit of government that our residents expect to be most responsive to the local needs and interests. Shawnee Township engages in extensive planning for the community and in many cases, this has kept and attracted residents. As township trustees we undertake zoning decisions for any number of other business interests. We have established our Comprehensive Land Plan for industrial, commercial, agriculture, and residential land use. For industrial and commercial projects that have the capacity to massively change the landscape, character, and quiet enjoyment of a community, our locals should be given a voice in their ability to locate in our backyards, front yards, and side yards. This bill doesn't ban solar or wind projects, it returns local control to the individuals who are accountable to these communities.

The Shawnee Township Trustees greatly appreciate the hard work and the thoughtful approach of the sponsors to this legislation. We thank the committee members for their consideration and time and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.