

**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 52
PROPONENT TESTIMONY
WALT POFFENBAUGH
HURON COUNTY, OHIO
May 19, 2021**

Chairman McColley, Vice-Chairman Schuring, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Committee. My name is Walt Poffenbaugh. My wife and I have lived in Norwich Township, in Huron County, for the past 24 years. Our residence is in the footprint of the Emerson Creek industrial wind turbine project in Huron County.

I appeared before you on March 9th of this year as a proponent of SB 52, and am here today as a proponent of the substitute bill this committee is now considering. I would like to speak today to the matter of cumulative impact, and how Sub SB 52 will allow cumulative impact to be dealt with through a mechanism called an Energy Development District. Sub SB 52 is needed because there is currently no other way, which I have seen, for anyone with the authority to do so, to say “enough is enough”. What has been occurring in my section of Northwest Ohio for at least the past ten years provides a graphic example of why we, the local residents, need local control of these types of projects. Someone has to be able to say, “enough is enough”.

My comments will primarily address the cumulative impact of the Republic Wind, Emerson Creek Wind and the as yet to be applied for Honey Creek Wind projects. These three projects abut one another, and cover portions of Sandusky, Seneca, Erie, Huron, and Crawford Counties in Northwest Ohio. The wind developer of all three of these projects is Apex Clean Energy.

The Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) considers these as separate projects despite the fact they are all being promoted by the same developer, and are literally butted up to each other. It is my opinion that it is impossible to discuss Emerson Creek Wind without also taking into account the impact of the other two projects.

Republic Wind and Emerson Creek Wind combined encompass 130,378 leased acres in portions of four adjacent counties in Northwest Ohio. 130,378 acres translates to 203 square miles. Apex Clean Energy has yet to file the application for Honey Creek Wind in Crawford and Seneca Counties with the OPSB. The total acres this project will cover have not yet been determined for the project but we know the

developer has been signing up landowners to leases in an approximate 200 square mile area. The total square miles covered by these three projects can be conservatively estimated at over 400 square miles.

I know it is difficult to gain a perspective of just how large an area this is. Please permit me to provide reference. The City of Columbus, which I imagine all of you are familiar with, covers 212 square miles. This sprawling city, which contains our State Capitol, is roughly one half the size of the area which will be used for the three projects currently proposed by Apex Clean Energy in my area of North Central Ohio.

Imagine, an industrial wind turbine area, containing turbines which are 655 feet tall, filling an area twice the size of the City of Columbus, covering a portion of five counties. Please note that this is just the area wind developers need for the current three proposed projects. Additional projects will obviously encroach on even more agricultural/residential land in our section of Ohio. We have it on good authority there are two more industrial wind projects in the immediate area which are in the pre-development stage by the same developer. These are known locally as Emerson Creek West and Buck Springs.

The table on page two of my written testimony contains information taken from the applications on file at the OPSB for Republic Wind and Emerson Creek Wind. The turbine placements of the two projects currently in the adjudication phase are:

<i>Project</i>	<i>Total Leased Acres</i>	<i>Square Miles</i>	<i>Turbines</i>	<i>Nameplate Generating Capacity/MW</i>	<i>Square Miles per Turbine</i>
Republic Wind	32,478	50.74	50	200	1.01
Emerson Creek Wind	41,000	64.06	62	297	1.03

(Source: OPSB Project Applications on File 07/2019)

Neither the Ohio Power Siting Board nor the Ohio General Assembly has ever recognized or adopted rules for cumulative impact. And now the crisis is upon us. This concentration of industrial wind projects is a classic example of how the cumulative impact will overburden an area, turning large swaths of Ohio into heavy industrial zones. Each of these five counties has a county-wide land use plan. Much of the area has local zoning. None of this matters when it comes to industrial scale renewable energy projects.

The point is, there is **nothing** the Ohio Power Siting Board can do to save our area. The OPSB evaluates each project on a separate basis, not in the context of other wind developments, even if the projects are

adjacent to one another. Even if these projects are all being developed by the same company. If these three projects are approved, it will mean you could literally drive for 40 minutes through North Central Ohio and constantly have 655 foot wind turbines in view. If the developer can meet the requirements for certification by the OPSB, the community is helpless. It has been suggested by some legislators that SB 52 is redundant and unnecessary given the rigorous process of evaluation and approval by the OPSB. Clearly, this is not so. Instead, the inability of the OPSB to address cumulative impact is a giant gaping hole in Ohio's regulatory siting procedures. Substitute SB 52 fills that gap.

I have personally provided the information I am giving you today at OPSB Public Hearings for industrial wind projects in my area I was allowed to testify at. My wife and I were intervenors in the Emerson Creek project. I have verbally provided this information to committees at the Ohio Senate and Ohio House of Representatives on at least five different occasions, for five different bills, all dealing with some form of local control. I have participated in stakeholder workshops for the OPSB pointing out the shortfalls in their process. I helped staff public education events where over 700 signatures of local people who oppose this type of development in Erie and Huron Counties were willing to go on the record and say so. All of these petitions were submitted to the Ohio Power Siting Board. There are 658 public comments available for viewing on the OPSB website for the Emerson Creek project. Most of those in opposition are from local residents who have no local control of their own neighborhood. Comments in favor of the project are primarily form letters generated from the developer's website and allegedly signed by people whose listed address is far away from North Central Ohio.

When is someone going to listen to local residents? When is someone going to say "enough is enough"?

In rural areas, the elected representatives closest to the people are township trustees. They know the local area, the uniqueness of their township, and have a better feel for the mindset of the people they represent than any elected official at the state level and certainly more than any person appointed to the OPSB. Sub SB 52 gives local townships, through the trustees, the right to declare their township, or a portion thereof, an Energy Development District. If township residents want renewable energy development they can have it. If they don't, they don't have to go through the anguish we and the residents of seven townships in Erie and Huron County have endured for the past several years. Energy developers will know going in whether a particular township is amenable to their project without spending one dime. Residents in our neighboring states, Indiana and Michigan, have been handling

renewable energy projects in a similar fashion for years. It hasn't seemed to deter solar fields and wind turbines in either of these states.

The newly confirmed Director of the OPSB, Jennifer French, has publicly stated it is not the OPSB's job to give a meaningful voice to local communities on industrial-size energy projects. She advised that job belongs to the General Assembly. Sub SB 52 is that meaningful voice, and you have the ability to give it to us.

My wife and I, and several hundred of our neighbors ask you to give local residents the opportunity to decide if our area is a good fit for an Energy Development District. There is no-one who knows our area better than we do.

Thank you for allowing me to speak to you today.

Respectfully submitted,

Walt Poffenbaugh

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