

Written testimony in opposition to HJR 19

Greg Pace, Columbus OH

Chairman Blessing and committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today, regarding House Joint Resolution 19.

I have spent the past four years in three attempts to get our city law on the ballot to protect citizens of Columbus from the risks to our public water, our soils, and our air, related to oil and gas wastes being disposed of in our city and in protection of its resources. Our third attempt was successful in getting well over the number of signatures required to put our initiative on the Columbus city ballot in November 2018.

Our group of volunteers jumped through every hoop, obtained the approval of sufficient ballot language from two Columbus city attorneys and with the full blessing of city council, it was sent to the Franklin County Board of Elections. The spokesperson for the board, who is an attorney in a firm that actively pushes back against our type of legislations in Ohio, disingenuously cited that because the board does not have the resources to legally challenge HB 463, he led them to unanimously vote against putting our ordinance on the ballot.

House Joint Resolution 19 is a superceding step to HB 463 that will further restrict Ohio residents' ability to be active in the legislation of our own government when bad laws do not get fixed, and it would be an absolute travesty to democratic principles in our state. IT is literally taking our state constitution farther out of the hands of the vast majority of voters.

More and more, we live in a "chandelier democracy", where the elite class who have powerful lobbying through their wealth and influence usurp control of our elected officials, dangling the ability to influence them over the heads of most of the citizens in our state, like a chandelier.

We need more "carpet democracy", where the less wealthy voting majority has more equal and balanced footing to influence OUR elected officials. This eventually will only occur when we drastically reduce private money in campaigns in the state of Ohio.

Until then, as a group you in OUR statehouse do not seem to be behaving as OUR government anymore. Most of your legislative wills are owned by the very business entities who flood the statehouse with their lobbyists and ALEC-bred laws that allow the corporations to rule the hen house, and take away the ability of Ohio communities to protect ourselves from their harms.

When Representative Leland was asked on Sunday by the NBC 4 commentator on the show 'The Spectrum' why the legislators want to require petitioners to collect signatures in the winter, his simple reply was "Because they don't want them!"

Please, prove me WRONG by keeping this blasphemy of a bill in what's left of our Ohio democratic republic off of the books. Thank you.