

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

PLEASE COMPLETE THE WITNESS INFORMATION FORM BEFORE TESTIFYING

DATE: 3-21-2017

NAME: Karl Mielke

ORGANIZATION: Landowners / farmer
(IF APPLICABLE)

POSITION/TITLE: ↑

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ARE YOU REPRESENTING: YOURSELF ORGANIZATION

DO YOU WISH TO TESTIFY ON
LEGISLATION (BILL NUMBER): HB 114
SPECIFIC ISSUE: _____
SUBJECT MATTER: _____

DO YOU FAVOR _____ OR OPPOSE THE ENACTMENT OF LEGISLATION REGARDING THIS ISSUE?

PLEASE GIVE A BRIEF STATEMENT OF THE GROUNDS ON WHICH YOU FAVOR OR OPPOSE SUCH ENACTMENT: Restricts our ability to take advantage of the economic benefits wind energy brings to my hometown region.

WILL YOU HAVE A WRITTEN STATEMENT, VISUAL AIDS, OR OTHER MATERIAL TO DISTRIBUTE?
YES NO
(IF YES, PLEASE PROVIDE COPIES TO THE CHAIRMAN OR SECRETARY)

HOW MUCH TIME WILL YOUR TESTIMONY REQUIRE? written-only

Testimony of Karl Mielke

Landowner

Opposition Testimony for Ohio HB 114

03/21/2017

Chairman Seitz, Vice Chair Carfagna, Ranking Member Ashford, and Members of the Ohio House Public Utilities Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am here to testify in opposition to HB 114.

My name is Karl Mielke and I am here today with my wife Nedra to discuss the important role that wind energy has played in building and preserving the businesses, communities and farms that have been an important part of our lives. I have lived in rural Ohio for all of my life and my wife and I know it as about as well as anyone can.

Wind power is just the newest cash crop for the farms and farmers of Ohio. Like soybeans and corn it generates jobs and farm income. It fits in perfectly with traditional farming: wind turbine towers in farm fields mean farmers have “crops” (one from the soil, the other from the wind) come from the same land.

One big difference between food crops and wind energy is that individuals and families decide what to buy and eat while energy is bought for us by utility companies – and this is why the renewable portfolio standard is needed to create a steady and reliable market for the “energy crop” harvested by wind turbines. The legislature agreed with this kind of thinking and in 2008 passed the renewable energy standards (nearly unanimously I am told).

Those standards set off a wave of wind farm construction that has greatly benefited our community, allowing farm families like ours to benefit from the lease payments that come from having wind turbines on our land. These are regular and reliable payments that come regardless of drought, crop failures or whatever is going on with crop prices at the moment – something that is essential for keeping farm families financially stable and letting us keep farms in the family.

This wave of development, thankfully, continued even after the legislature placed a “freeze” on the standards in 2014. Projects that were identified and sketched out by developers because of the standards continued to move forward. At this very moment our friends at EDP Renewables are completing one of those projects back in Paulding County – that new wind farm will supply power for the computers of Amazon Web Services and in fact is going to be called the Amazon Wind Farm U.S. Central, a good name for a wind farm here in the heart and center of the country. When that wind farm is in operation, very soon, not only will our farms be supplying food for folks in places like Columbus we will be making the electricity behind the Netflix movies and other internet material coming into your homes. But when you stop planting seeds you stop getting crops and the freeze has been like an end to seeding of new wind farm projects and sooner or later (and probably sooner) the harvest of new projects will stop.

HB 114, which brings us all here today, is an extension of that freeze, whether you label it that way or not. Making the standards a “goal” and not a requirement and saying it is not an extension of the freeze is just the kind of double-talk that people are sick of hearing from politicians. If a farmer in Paulding County needs a piece of equipment they don’t want the folks at Paulding True Value to have a “goal” of having it ready and available at a particular day or time. They need a commitment. If we want our utilities to keep slowly and steadily increase the amount of energy from this local source we should say it like we mean it and end the freeze.

I urge you to say no to this bill. And then you can turn your attention to helping local businesses and families by rolling back the anti-business over-regulation of Wind Farm zoning which was snuck, in a late-night maneuver I am told, into the RPS freeze law.

Those “setback” requirements which go beyond what they use in Indiana (right across the border from us) and in many other states is a classic example of government overregulation that deprives farmland owners of the ability to make full productive use of their own land. Restoring the zoning rules to where they were before the 2014 change will let farmers and communities that want wind farms to have them. This would not just be good for those particular farmers and communities it would also attract other businesses, like Amazon and their big computer banks, that want to buy power from those wind farms.

I appreciate your time and consideration today.