

Northwest State Community College

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Proponent Testimony of Jim Hoops on S. B. No. 188

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Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Troy Balderson, Chair

Wednesday, October 11, 2017

Chairman Balderson, Vice Chair Jordan, Ranking Member O'Brien, and Members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, thank you for the opportunity to submit written proponent testimony for Senate Bill 188. My name is Jim Hoops and I am the Associate Vice President for Strategic Initiatives at Northwest State Community College, located in Henry County.

I bring a special appreciation for the work you do since I formerly served as a state representative. I know your responsibilities require you to work long hours, learn dozens of topics, balance competing priorities, and politely and diligently serve all members of the public. You must balance our budget, safeguard our tax dollars, and grow our economy in a rapidly-changing world. These duties have only become more challenging in the time since I was in office. Thank you for your service.

To share a bit about Northwest State Community College (NSCC), we are a public two-year college offering degree and certificate programs in a wide range of arts and sciences, business and industrial technologies, and math, science, and engineering technologies. Our mission is to provide excellent, affordable education and training that empowers individuals and communities to achieve a sustainable quality of life.

In today's technologically-driven, fast-moving economy, it is colleges like NSCC that are on the front lines of job opportunities. It's my honor to work every day with young people and workers who want to continue their education, and it's our challenge to provide them marketable skills so they can succeed in the workforce.

And in today's globally-competitive world, we all have the responsibility to make prudent decisions with long-term growth in view so that we maximize opportunities for Ohio workers and families.

It's with this responsibility in mind that I call upon you to establish once again in Ohio law reasonable turbine setback provisions for wind energy farms so investment is encouraged, more projects are built, more tax benefits support local communities, and more bright young men and women studying at NSCC find good-paying careers in a promising industry poised to grow in our state.

NSCC faculty partner with training institutions throughout the region to provide career training in the new field of wind turbine technicians. Our graduates are qualified to maintain turbines and keep them operating smoothly so they generate power for the grid and revenue for our communities. If you consider that Northwest Ohio's strong prevailing winds make it a leading area for future wind development, you can see that our training program can become an economic lynchpin: a place where workers can find opportunity in a growing field that promises to expand rapidly in the future.

Consider these facts about the wind technician field:

- A wind turbine technician is now the fastest-growing profession in the U.S., according to the American Wind Energy Association. The occupation will increase 108 percent over the next 10 years.
- In 2016, the industry added 15,000 jobs and employed a record 102,500 Americans in all 50 states.
- As wind energy grows, 248,000 related jobs by 2020 are possible, according to a study released this spring by Navigant Consulting.
- The industry provides well-paying jobs in wind energy project planning, siting, development, construction, manufacturing and supply chain, and operations.

But we won't realize this potential without fixing Ohio's current wind setback standard. The current requirement was almost tripled in 2014 to a minimum 1,125 feet from the property line, an increase so great that it has disqualified new wind farm sites and brought wind energy development to a standstill. No new projects means no wind technician job growth, and that could force NSCC graduates to move out of state to find opportunities. They shouldn't have to, and Ohio can't afford that kind of brain drain anymore. Let's keep our sons and daughters here at home so their talent and enthusiasm will grow *our* economy, not that of another state.

I therefore ask the Committee to take prompt action to restore reasonable wind setback standards to Ohio law by favorably reporting out S.B. 188 and recommending it to the full Senate.

Let's work together to help the Buckeye State attract local investment and grow local employment—and not surrender that role to neighboring states. We owe it to our young people and to ourselves.

Thank you for considering my testimony today.

Jim Hoops

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