Senator Dave Burke

Senate Building

1 Capitol Square

Columbus, Ohio 43215

Good morning Senator Burke. I am Mark Weisenauer, a farmer and truck driver from Venice Township in Seneca County. I recently read House Bill 6 passed the vote in the House, and is now up for debate in the Senate. I am not sure forcing consumers to bail out the nuclear power plants is a good idea; however, my main concern with this bill is the amendment introduced by Representative Reineke concerning the wind energy projects in various stages of progression in my county. Allowing all voters in a township to decide the fate of these projects will most likely stop them from being completed. I have several issues with the precedent this amendment may set.

I have read many letters from members of the Seneca Anti Wind Union in the local paper; the information in these letters is sometimes hard to believe. One topic of the letters concerns the tactics used by Apex Clean Energy in procuring signatures on various leases. I entered into a lease for the Honey Creek Wind project on my farm about ten years ago; my lease was signed with Next Era Energy, which sold the project to Apex. When the representative gave me the lease to examine, he did not want me to sign the document on the spot; I was advised to see my lawyer prior to entering the lease. Next Era even paid me for the legal fees. I was never forced to sign anything; if I wanted to participate I could, if not, no problem. My elderly neighbor recently signed a lease with Apex on her small farm. The Apex representative gave her the lease to read, and suggested she have her children examine it before signing the document. My neighbor was given time to make a decision prior to the representative visiting to pick it up. At no time was she threatened to sign. I am opposed to passing legislation to rescue a landowner who entered into a contract without reading the document, or failed to obtain legal advice.

Another topic the opponents of wind energy present concerns the safety of wind energy. I recall viewing a picture of a dozen small abandoned turbines in Hawaii sent to me by the leader of the Anti Wind Union; I was asked if this is what I want to see on my drive to Tiffin. The truth is the turbines in this project will be placed far away from public roads. One letter to the paper asked if the money paid to members of the project would be worth having ice fly off the blades of a turbine, crash through a school bus window, and injure or kill a child. In reality, the Ohio Power Siting Board requires studies to be completed to ensure the safety of the roads, including an ice throw analysis in case the built-in ice monitor in the turbine malfunctions and does not stop the turbine from spinning when ice is on the blade. Misleading information similar to this is the reason many are opposed to wind energy.

The opposition has stated out-of-state companies are pushing the wind energy projects in my area; no local citizens want them here. This is not true; if no landowners signed leases, the project would have terminated before it started. Over a thousand landowners in my area, including multiple projects, have signed leases. Yellow signs along the road, in addition to the people in yellow shirts at the House last week, give the impression most in the area are opposed to wind energy. This is not accurate; those who are part of the project have no reason to protest anything. Apex is proceeding by following all state regulations related to wind generation, even with the increased set-back distances recently enacted in Ohio.

The possible effects of this amendment may reach farther than the wind projects in Seneca County. I am employed by Hord Family Farms in Bucyrus; I deliver feed to our many contract hog facilities. If this bill passes as amended, and voters decide the fate of the wind projects, what will be next? Will a farmer need to obtain voter approval prior to building a hog finishing building? Will voters be allowed to decide how much dust a combine is allowed to make, or what hours farmers are allowed to work their fields? Will I need voter approval to plant or remove a tree, build or tear down a barn, or make other improvements on my farm? The majority of the Anti Wind signs are placed where someone has purchased several acres on a corner of a farm to build a house. Why should a voter who owns two acres have a say in what happens on my 140-acre farm? These people chose to build in an agricultural area. If these home owners want an unobstructed view of the area surrounding them, the entire property should have been purchased, not just two or three acres. These are working farms that need to continue to adapt and advance to find the best use for the land. Whether that use is a hog barn, a solar farm, a wind turbine surrounded by corn, or just crops by themselves, that decision is the landowner’s to make – not for the community to vote on and decide how a landowner uses his land.

The future of business investment in Ohio may suffer if this bill, as amended, becomes law. Apex has invested many hours, and much money, on these wind projects. If the voters in the affected townships reject wind energy, what business will want to move to Ohio knowing the rules may change at any time? Apex has adjusted to several changes, such as the increased set-back distances, but now the project will be terminated if voters fail to approve. If this occurs, all money invested by Apex will be lost. This precedent may cause businesses to avoid Ohio in order to prevent loss of their investment. Why would the next Davis Bessie, the next coal plant, the next pipeline, be treated any differently the second a community starts showing opposition?

I believe the move to renewable energy sources is necessary to protect the environment, and to supply sufficient electricity for future generations. There is no doubt supplies of coal and natural gas will become exhausted at some point in the future. The passage of this bill, as amended, will almost certainly halt construction of wind farms in Ohio. In my township, there are more voters living in Attica than in rural areas. My farm is approximately six miles from Attica; this bill will allow these voters to deny my right to participate in the Honey Creek Wind project, even though none would be affected by the turbines.

Thank you for taking time to read this letter, and for allowing my opinion to be heard. Please do not allow fears created by one group to terminate clean energy projects which will benefit the environment, as well as provide tax revenue for schools and other county needs.

Sincerely:

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