

Proponent Testimony of Chris Aichholz
Seneca County, Ohio
SB 234 – Senate Energy and Public Utilities
January 28, 2020

Chairman Wilson, Vice Chairman McColley, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Committee, my name is Chris Aichholz. I am a resident of Seneca County and I am here today to provide proponent testimony on SB 234.

This bill is absolutely critical to me and thousands of people all across Ohio. In neighboring states such as Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois, local control is predominant in the siting of industrial scale wind projects (**see resource link #5**). However, here in Ohio that is not the case. Large projects are reviewed and approved only at the state level by the Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB). The members who make up this board are not elected officials but rather are appointed. Yet these board members, along with wind industry corporations from outside of Ohio, make all the decisions, without having full knowledge of local priorities held by area citizens.

In Seneca County, we are facing as many as six very large industrial wind turbine (IWT) projects. These projects, will cover over 250 square miles of agricultural/residential zoned land. While I acknowledge there are leases signed with landowners who enable these projects to happen, I believe it is inexcusable that there is very little opportunity for collective community input in the design and execution of these transformative projects. For instance, in my area, several of these project proposals have had poor designs which have led to extensive unrest and opposition to them. Some of these design flaws include, the reduction of the usefulness of our local area airports, the limiting of air ambulance accessibility, locating 21 IWT's within a 2.5 mile radius of a county nature preserve, placing dozens of IWT's within two miles of active Bald Eagles nests, placing as many as 16 600' IWT's within a two mile radius of our newest local K-12 school (which had to intervene against the Seneca Wind Project (**see resource link #1**) and spend its resources to defend itself), and, placing dozens of these massive IWT's on Ohio's largest single Karst formations which is highly unstable.

Currently, the only way local citizens can even try to address these issues is by spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on legal counsel to represent us in the OPSB's process. Our county, schools, park district, airports, and local residents, all must come up with significant amounts of money to fund their interventions. Such a process is extremely burdensome on locals just to ensure they have spot in the OPSB's process. Currently Republic Wind has reached the Adjudicatory Hearing phase where we have continuously witnessed the developer, APEX Clean Energy, try to discredit, degrade, and even have our elected officials, experts, local residents, and other citizens blocked from providing testimony (**see resource links #2, #3, and #4**) to the OPSB Administrative Law Judge (ALJ).

And even after expending all of this money, time, and effort in the process which the State now calls "local input" there is no guarantee that any of the specific issues which are of concern in our community

will be addressed. The current wind project siting process is fundamentally FLAWED, UNJUST, and ABUSIVE to the citizens of Ohio. Trying to justify the current process, by saying it will help the environment and is good for business, is but the rubbing of salt into the wounds of Ohio citizens who have been disenfranchised. That there is no other form of economic development that transforms ENTIRE communities into heavy industrial zones, and does so without the consensus agreement of local residents, is INDEFENSIBLE.

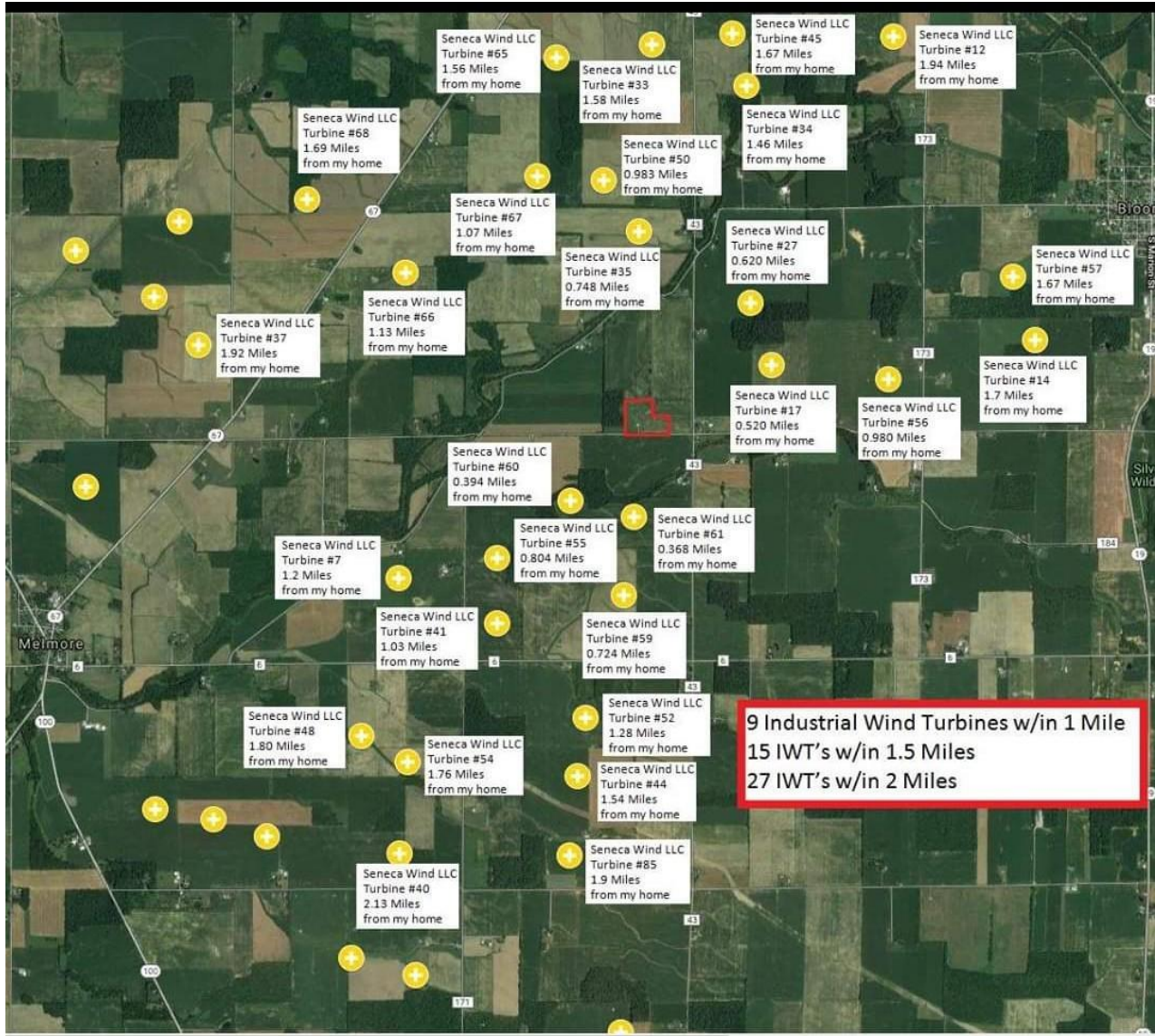
Under this system people like me and my family are left without a voice in the complete transformation of the neighborhood in which we live. Seneca Wind LLC is planning to place 27 IWT's, as tall as 652ft, within a two mile radius of our home (see attached Google Map image **Exhibit 1**). My wife and I have worked very hard to be able to afford our family's home. As a young family starting out we searched for a long time and purchased a home in a wonderful location to give us ample opportunities for growth, enjoyment, and the potential to raise our two young children in a safe and peaceful location. Now we are faced with having our neighborhood transformed into a heavy industrial zone without being able to afford attorneys to try to have some say in the matter. Although the referendum opportunity offered by SB 234 is no guarantee that my concern would be remedied, at least I would know that our voices were heard.

This is what makes SB 234 such great legislation. It ensures that hard working folks, whether opposed or in favor of these projects, will have a voice. I humbly acknowledge that my voice is no more important than that of other citizens. But I adamantly contend that it is of no LESS importance either. Should a local vote prove that the majority of citizens in my township are in favor of the wind project, it would make the transformation easier for me to accept, because I would know it was the consensus opinion of my neighbors and not the result of outside forces and agendas.

Moving forward WITHOUT this legislation will leave communities without a voice, and wind development will continue to drive wedges between friends, neighbors, and even families. I urge you to support Senate Bill 234, which will ensure Ohioans a voice in the future of their own communities, and prove that the great state of Ohio treats its citizens with the dignity and respect that truly great people deserve.

Thank You

Exhibit 1 – Chris Aichholz’s property (outlined in red), showing 27 IWT’s (yellow dots with white plus signs) within a two mile radius of it.



Resource Links

1. Seneca East Local Schools intervention in the Seneca Wind Project:
 - <http://dis.puc.state.oh.us/DocumentRecord.aspx?DocID=4492b873-d0d5-4c4e-aaff-fd1069e4a054>

1. Republic Wind LLC (APEX Clean Energy) motions to strike testimony from local bird/bat expert Mark Shieldcastle, Director of Research at the Black Swamp Bird Observatory. (Shieldcastle has a degree in Wildlife Management from The Ohio State University. He was on staff at Ohio State with the Ohio Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit before accepting a position with the Ohio Division of Wildlife where he has spent thirty-two years as a Wildlife Biologist specializing in avian research and in 2012 he retired from his position as Project Leader of Wetland Wildlife Research.)
<http://dis.puc.state.oh.us/DocumentRecord.aspx?DocID=e6c30598-ce16-4b4a-aab7-1435fbd54bb5>
2. Republic Wind LLC (APEX Clean Energy) motions to strike testimony from Seneca County Park District's Director Sarah Betts
<http://dis.puc.state.oh.us/DocumentRecord.aspx?DocID=ef9d88fe-57a9-4fd3-a913-1d8773c79679>
3. Republic Wind LLC (APEX Clean Energy) submits memorandum contra to additional Seneca County Local Residents' Petition to Intervene
<http://dis.puc.state.oh.us/DocumentRecord.aspx?DocID=932a7e4f-7a46-41ba-9922-f1d957258f9b>
4. Document showing Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois (others as well) that have some form of local control with regard to IWT projects
<http://www.ncsl.org/research/energy/state-wind-energy-siting.aspx>