

Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee  
Senator Steve Wilson – Chairman

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Gerald Wilbert. I am a landowner, farmer, and life-long citizen of Seneca County, Ohio. I write to ask for your help in dealing with the aggressive wind developers in my community.

I was approached by the wind land agents several years ago when they indicated they needed a few acres of mine to build an electrical substation for one of their projects. I cooperated with them by signing one agreement stating they could buy the land when the time came that they needed it and a second agreement granting them a defined easement across my farm to build a transmission line. As the years progressed, and the details of the local wind project were made public, I started to hear from neighbors that this particular wind company was not to be trusted and had repeatedly misrepresented the fine print in the contracts they were having other local landowners sign.

I dismissed these comments at the time based on my own experience with the company. However, as my land purchase agreement recently came to its expiration date, the wind agents were back at my door. As I listened to their stories a little closer, I started to realize that my neighbors were correct in their warning. The details of the project plans were different than what I was initially led to believe. Then came the day when my 97-year-old mother, who lives alone on her adjacent farm, told me the wind agents had stopped by and had her sign some papers. However, she indicated she was not entirely clear what the wind agents had said or what she signed. The wind agents did this without ever informing me and without even leaving a copy with my mother of what she had signed. That was the last straw! I will not renew my expired agreement nor will I cooperate any longer with this project.

I have learned from my own experiences that wind developers will say and do anything to get their papers signed and to get on to your property. They will take advantage of the elderly and the trusting. They will hide every negative detail about the project they intend to build. Meanwhile, we the local citizens are powerless to do anything once we learn the truth, since the state of Ohio has taken away all local control. While many representatives and senators are working to return this local control, others are still standing hand in hand with the wind companies and participating in the abuse of Ohio citizens.

If Senate Bill 234 gives the area residents the chance to vote on whether the project can be built, then at least we will know that our voice has some meaning. Maybe then my community will be able to decide it's own future instead of having it dictated to us by the state and outside corporations who show no mercy and have no shame when they run roughshod over our neighborhoods. Until local control is returned to the citizens, I will never have a good word to say about wind projects and will join my neighbors in spreading the word across Ohio that the entire wind energy game is nothing more than a state backed bunch of cronies intent on plundering local communities for a fast buck and not caring who gets hurt as a result.

If the wind companies knew they were answerable to a vote of the local people, I have no doubt they would treat us with more respect. Senators, if you have any respect and appreciation for the rural Ohio citizens who fill your dinner plate then you will return local control to us by passing Senate Bill 234.

Thank you,

  
Paula Wilbert

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Gerald and Paula Wilbert (Abused citizens of Ohio)