

The Honorable Brett Hudson Hillyer
Chairman, House Civil Justice Committee
Riffe Center
77 S. High St., 11th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215
RE: H.B. 63

Chair Hillyer, Vice Chair Grendell, Ranking member Galonski, and Members of the House Civil Justice Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to provide my testimony in support of House Bill 63.

The issue I have with the current code is that unelected officials have the authority to take land. No person in a park district is an elected official. All the board members are appointed by the Probate Judge. The Probate Judge has no involvement in the daily operation. The board members of a park district meet once a month for a few hours. The director of a park district controls the park and the board relies on that person for all the resolutions they vote on. The park director is in this position for a long period of time while the board members and Probate Judge are there for a few years. The Probate Judge is the only elected official. I doubt issues concerning a park district are on the voters minds when selecting the Probate Judge. There is no direct link for the public to control a park district. How many special districts are like this? Even school board members are elected officials. How many non-elected officials have the direct power of eminent domain? I doubt any.

These modifications to the code are necessary to give citizens the opportunity to protect their property from non-elected officials. They need the ability to reach out to someone who is accountable. Whether or not a park district should have the power of eminent domain is not the issue. The simple fact that a park district has unfettered power to use it is.

Please support this bill and give people their right to representation.

Sincerely,

Josh Staley
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Paris, Ohio 44669