

May 23, 2023

Testimony of Timothy Wagner, resident of Columbus Ohio

Dear Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cerino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee.

I wrote testimony in opposition to HB 434 and now it has been inserted into the Budget Bill. I am copying my previous testimony with the reasons why I oppose subsidizing an Ohio Nuclear Development Authority in the Budget Bill. I oppose HB 33 unless and until the language creating an Ohio Nuclear Development Authority is removed (pages 1887-1987). My reasons are as follows:

I am concerned about the public's inability to observe the functioning of the organization created by this bill. The proposed amendment would put the Nuclear Development Authority under the Department of Development, where many of its activities would be under the auspices of JobsOhio, where they would be exempt from Ohio Open Records requests. Why is it necessary to hide the activities of this Authority from those of us who would be funding it?

My understanding is that this bill indefinitely funds and indemnifies private enterprise with taxpayer money. I have lived in Ohio my whole life and believe in the capitalist, free-market system. This portion of HB 33 appears to be in sharp contrast to this economic system. It appears to be a socialist product where the taxpayers take all the risk and private entrepreneurs make all the money. I spent five years of my life in the military participating in the fight to prevent this kind of economic structure from spreading from North Vietnam to South Vietnam. And now there are Ohio legislators proposing that we allow this to grow, not only in our own country, but in our own state. I object!

Since this bill is in the Finance Committee, can you please tell us how much this would cost the taxpayers of Ohio each year, and for how many years we could expect to be subsidizing this private venture?

The brief history of reactors that use sodium or molten salts for fuel or cooling is far from encouraging. Just look at the four-year life of the reactor at Oak Ridge and the near meltdown of Fermi 1 on Lake Erie. Please do not subject our state to these kinds of obvious risks.

If this is a good idea, why aren't our capitalists jumping on board and funding it. If the risks are too high for them, why should Ohio taxpayers take the risks that I am sure are very high.

I don't believe Ohio has any business getting involved in this kind of enterprise. It seems more appropriate for the US Department of Energy and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to be discussing and considering this. If it is a good idea for our country and needs taxpayer support, then the risks and the costs should be shouldered by the federal government.

Since the main purpose for nuclear processing in our country is to produce nuclear weapons, the US Defense Department should be spearheading these initiatives, not the Ohio legislature.

Ohio has a long history of work with radioactive materials, including at Piketon and Battelle. All of these places have been highly radioactively contaminated, requiring very expensive cleanup. We don't need to add to our state's radioactive waste mess, especially at taxpayers' cleanup expense.

I encourage you to take the long view of the costs, risks, and other downside ramifications of this decision and recognize the future negative impacts on our fine state.