

November 13, 2018

To the Ohio State Senate Judiciary Committee:

I strongly oppose S.B. 250 which prioritizes the gas and oil industry's rights *over* the people of Ohio. Put another way, this bill considers the rights of the gas and oil industry to endanger Ohio's natural resources *before* the rights of our citizens to protect them. In short, S.B. 250 puts corporate profits first, not people.

Ohioans must trust that you, as our state representatives, will always put people first. If any bill provides a litmus test as to whether our representatives stand with the people of Ohio or the fossil fuel industry, it is S.B. 250. There are many reasons for this, though I present just four below:

1. S.B. 250 does not emanate from the people. The fact is, there is not a groundswell of Ohioans calling for draconian laws to prevent protests against fracking. Most have never heard of this bill and those who have, do not want it. So who wants S.B. 250? I'm guessing the gas and oil industry and ALEC. With it, they gain the authority of the state to stifle opposition and criminalize dissent.

2. S.B. 250 violates the laws and the spirit of the U.S. and Ohio constitutions. While the people do not have anywhere near the money and influence that corporate backers of this bill do, we do have constitutional rights. In a genuine democracy, these should, of course, carry more weight than corporate influence. After all, both constitutions guarantee "We the People" our rights to ...

* govern ourselves, including on the issues like fracking;

* life, liberty, and property, all endangered by fracking and hence laws that allow, promote, and protect it;

* pursue happiness, which Ohioans cannot do when sick and dying from the hazards of fracking operations and its toxic and radioactive waste; and

* freedom of expression, which this bill seeks to severely limit and punish.

3. S.B. 250 goes against the efforts of Ohioans who – *through the democratic process* – seek to protect the health of the people, the safety of our environment, and the future of our state and nation. What has been the reaction of many of our elected who took an oath to represent us? Applause for our efforts as citizens who are committed to democracy and the welfare of our state? On the contrary. Our lawmakers (hopefully not those of you on this committee) continuously create obstacles to block our efforts. S.B. 250 is another one of those obstacles.

Question: Concerned citizens have no need to turn to civil disobedience when the democratic process works for them as much as it does for big monied interests. If the state blocks citizen efforts to put anti-fracking measures on ballots and gain fair hearings in the courts, how do you propose that those who know of its dangers have a real voice on the issue?

4. S.B. 250 advances climate change. Two major forces in our world that still refuse to believe that people are causing rapid climate change are FOX news and a small but powerful group of American elected officials. If you are among either of these groups, I beg you to consider that 99 percent of climate scientists agree that climate change is real, due to our heavy reliance on fossil fuels, and accelerating at a rate beyond predicted models. (How many experts and record hurricanes, floods, droughts, and forest fires does it take to convince the deniers of this?) While climate change is fast becoming a leading cause of illness and death, many of our Ohio General Assembly consistently privileges the fossil fuel industry over Ohioans' health.

I gather that many of you may be under great pressure to support this bill. As a citizen who has been trying to nudge the system toward a more representative form of government, I understand this. What I do not get is how any such costs could justify putting gas and oil industry profits before the health of people, the future of our natural resources, and the legitimacy of American democracy.

Given the implicit moral imperatives involved in this bill, I end this not with a plea to vote against S.B. 250, but an appeal to vote your conscience as an Ohio representative committed to the people of our great state and to a government of, by, and for the people.

Please, ask any questions you may have, which are no doubt many given the fossil fuel industry's domination of the issue. It has all the money in the world to convince others that fracking is safe and good for business and for Ohio. The opposition has no money, just credible evidence, a concern for others, and an incorrigible belief in democracy.

Thank you for your time and attention,

Sincerely,

Sandy Bolzenius