



Ohio Environmental Council [Action Fund]

December 7th, 2022

To: Members of the Ohio Senate

From: Pete Bucher, Interim President, Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund

Re: HB 507

Dear Honorable Senator,

I am writing to inform you that the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) Action Fund will be scoring House Bill 507 for the purposes of our Legislative Scorecard for the 134th Ohio General Assembly. We urge a **NO vote on HB 507**. To the extent that HB 507 passes, the OEC Action Fund will be doing extensive public education on the content and the votes on this legislation due to its negative impact to Ohio's environment and the health of Ohioans.

This legislation features two amendments that significantly overreach on the intended scope of the original legislation, and serve as significant concessions to fossil fuel interests at the expense of everyday Ohioans. These amendments were added in at the last minute, with no significant public discussion.

1. Amendment 134_4113-1 defines natural gas as “green energy”, a factually incorrect claim that serves to continue a fossil fuel industry myth. This language purposefully misconstrues natural gas's true role as a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution, and climate change. This language misrepresents the impact natural gas has on our environment. The language does not impact the Renewable Portfolio Standard, but codifying this misleading language could provide cover for future legislation or efforts at the Public Utilities Commission to increase investment in natural gas resources at the expense of cleaner, renewable energy.

2. Amendment 134_3853 creates a state public lands leasing free-for-all. This amendment eliminates important public oversight and authority and gift-wraps Ohioans' state parks and public lands for the oil and gas industry.

Specifically, the amendment does the following:

- Forces state agencies to lease state parks and public lands for fracking and oil and gas development when the industry says so. (Under current law, state agencies have discretion over whether to lease state land. State agencies include state universities and state colleges for purposes of this bill);
- Gives oil and gas corporations effective control over what state lands are leased for fracking and when;
- Creates a first-come, first-serve leasing scheme that could lead to a run on state lands leasing and fracking;
- Harms taxpayers by end-running the public bid process that the current statute otherwise requires (in favor of the amendment's first-come, first-serve leasing scheme);
- Opens a major legal loophole that end-runs otherwise required public notice and comment on state lands leasing decisions;
- Bypasses the state Oil and Gas Land Management Commission's charge to consider environmental and recreational impacts to public lands prior to deciding whether to authorize leasing;



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- Bypasses restrictions on oil and gas development (wellpads, pipelines, tanks, etc.) being located on the surface of state parks and public lands (“surface occupancy”)

HB 507, originally intended to address poultry and food safety, now contains cynical giveaways to fossil fuel interests. The legislation decreases oversight into oil and gas extraction, and sets a misleading precedent by defining natural gas as “green energy”. All of the final amendments were included with no meaningful public deliberation. For those reasons, the OEC Action Fund urges members of the Ohio Senate to vote **NO on HB 507**.

If you have any questions, please direct them to me, Pete Bucher at pbucher@theoec.org.

Sincerely,

Pete Bucher
Interim President
OEC Action Fund