



Ohio Citizen Action

The premier grassroots mobilizing and organizing team in the Midwest

April 30, 2019

The Honorable Larry Householder
Speaker, Ohio House of Representatives
77 S. High Street, 14th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: House Energy and Natural Resources
Committee

Dear Speaker Householder,

On behalf of Ohio Citizen Action, I write to ask you to remove Representative Nino Vitale (R-Champaign, Logan and part of Shelby) as Chairman of the Ohio House Energy and Natural Resources Committee. You'll recall that we recently sent a letter asking for Rep. Dick Stein's resignation after he shared his biased anti-wind generation technology stance while representing himself as an all-the-above leader in making decisions related to Ohio's energy future. Already, here we are again now that Vitale has made his bias against low-income Ohioans and the energy programs that benefit them known. Stein, co-chairman of the Ohio House Subcommittee on Energy Generation expressed his anti-renewable view and now Vitale is sharing his anti-energy efficiency opinion. It's interesting that leadership among the House's energy committees are against two fundamental aspects of our energy future – energy efficiency and renewable energy. Ironically, these are the areas excluded under House Bill 6.

As an organization with a strong commitment to helping all consumers see the benefits of clean, renewable and energy efficiency efforts and affordable utility bills, we find Vitale's comments are imprudent, inappropriate, narrow-minded and discriminatory.

Vitale supports House Bill 6 because he wants to strip poorer Ohioans of their energy efficiency options. A recent article in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* has highlighted Vitale's biased beliefs.

He has said, **"I ask, how many subsidy programs do we need to give away? We are already paying for food, heating assistance, cell phones, child support, and the list goes on and on."**

"While this may sound mean to some, a little hunger in the belly or being a little cold on some really cold days is a good incentive for me to get up, go to work and provide for my 5 boys and wife," the Urbana lawmaker continued. "If everything is provided for me through government programs that I will never have to reimburse, what incentive is there for me to ever change and cover my own expenses?"

As the Chairman of the committee, Vitale should understand that the energy efficiency program has saved ALL Ohioans \$5.1 billion through 2017. And, for every \$1 spent on the program Ohioans receive \$2.65 in savings. And, according to a recent Clean Energy Jobs Midwest report, energy efficiency employs over 81,000 Ohioans.

According to The Ohio Poverty Report published by Ohio Development Services Agency in February 2019:

- 14 percent of all people in the state have a poverty status.
- Children ages 0-11 and young adults 18 to 24 had poverty rates exceeding 20 percent.
- About 7.6 percent of people ages 65 and older were poor.
- Women ages 18 to 34 years have much higher poverty rates than men of comparable ages.

Poverty and energy insecurity are real. Is the chairman so bent on gutting energy efficiency that he would compound poverty and energy insecurity among Ohio's most vulnerable?

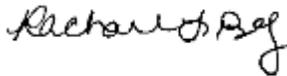
We find it reprehensible that an Ohio lawmaker would prefer to subsidize a bankrupt energy giant, rather than assist low-income Ohioans with programs that would keep them warm and ultimately help save money. Yet, House Bill 6 would require those same low-income consumers to pay to bailout FirstEnergy's nuclear plants. Vitale's stance fails to put the needs of his constituents first. It fails to think of those in need. It fails to see the big picture or listen to logic. Ironically, 11.1 percent of residents in Champaign county live in poverty as do 13.7 percent of Logan residents and 8.9 percent of Shelby residents – all Vitale's constituents.

Vitale is entitled to his own beliefs and bias towards poor Ohioans, but he has revealed his one-sided goal to benefit Wall Street investors – not hardworking Ohioans. Someone so blatantly opposed to helping low-income Ohioans is unfit to lead the Ohio House Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Mr. Speaker, we hope you agree that by his actions, Rep. Vitale is unfit to lead as Chairman.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Rachael L. Belz, Executive Director
Ohio Citizen Action

CC: Governor Michael DeWine, Lt. Governor Jon Husted,
The Honorable Emilia Strong Sykes, Democratic
Leadership Members, Ohio House Energy and Natural
Resources Committee

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