



Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee

SB 298
State of Ohio Energy Policy

Submitted by:
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, I am Janine Migden-Ostrander, Ohio's Consumers' Counsel, representing over 4.5 million residential utility households. I am here today to offer proponent testimony for Senate Bill 298 which would provide for a state energy policy.

S.B. 298 in its current form briefly outlines a general policy for the state of Ohio to support activities relating to the development of technologically feasible clean coal usage, ensuring access to affordable and reliable natural gas service, the development of facilities that will lead to increased production of ethanol and other renewable energy sources as well as the development and the implementation of practical uses for energy efficiency and conservation. At a time when we have witnessed natural gas prices doubling in two short years, it is important to take a long-term view of our energy usage and make some decisions that will benefit all Ohioans now and well into the future. I commend Chairman Schuler for the introduction of S.B. 298 and for initiating the dialogue that will hopefully result in a comprehensive energy policy for the state of Ohio.

A statewide energy policy would give direction and focus to Ohio as a matter of policy. It would diversify our fuel mix, improve our energy independence, and lessen the nation's security concerns stemming from our dependence on energy resources from uncertain foreign suppliers. A statewide energy policy would produce economic benefits by creating jobs, and it would

reduce the price we pay for energy in the long run. S.B. 298 provides the perfect forum to spark ideas, engage in discussion and build consensus to identify and implement the right approach for Ohio.

An energy policy with a multifaceted approach would serve Ohio well. The most effective means in which to implement these options would be:

- First - Maximize energy efficiency. The cheapest, cleanest source of energy is usually the energy we don't use.
- Second - Maximize the viable use of renewable energy and allow consumers to take more control of their energy usage through distributed generation. This will minimize depletion of non-renewable fossil fuels.
- Third - Support clean fossil fuel technology and urge Congress to seek additional supplies of current sources of fuel.

I believe that the Senate, through the direction of Chairman Schuler and President Harris, and through the collaboration and cooperation of other state agencies and the energy providers of this state, can develop a comprehensive plan that will become a model for other states. Already, Connecticut has passed legislation calling for this kind of planning on a cooperative basis with the commission, energy office, consumer advocate and utility companies.

My office pledges all of its support to help in this discussion and welcomes the opportunity to help in the research, development and the implementation of this statewide energy plan. Mr. Chairman, thank you for bringing this bill forward and we look forward to working with you and your Senate colleagues on this extraordinarily important piece of legislation. I would ask through this discussion that our office be included as one of the agencies that will work cooperatively on this important project. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you or your committee might have at this time.