

March 1, 2010

Gov. Ted Strickland
77 South High Street
Columbus OH 43215

Dear Governor Strickland:

I was concerned to realize that the state of Ohio is offering state subsidies to the Beard Energy Company to build another coal plant in Ohio. While I realize converting to alternative energy sources is initially more costly, in the long run there are cleaner fuel sources available that would have less detrimental effects on our environment.

I was excited to see on a recent trip the wind farms in the Lafayette area. The fifth grade class that I teach are taking part in a program encouraging children to become aware of and minimize wasteful energy use, and then going home and passing this information along to their parents. We spend much time and effort teaching our children that alternative sources for energy are available. Yes, coal is cheaper, but at what cost? They are amazed that we, as a society, continue to depend on an energy source that has such a negative impact on our environment. They have the same incredulous looks on their faces when we talk about times when people thought it was alright to discriminate against people because of their skin color or when people didn't realize smoking was bad for their health. They don't seem to understand why, when faced with difficult or costly choices, those in power choose what is easier, not what is right.

I understand that there are variables far beyond my scope of understanding with this issue and that there isn't a unilateral "right" choice. However, we can't say one thing to our children and then give incentives to companies like Beard Energy to do the opposite of what we are teaching them. I am a government employee every time I step into my classroom and teach my students from the Ohio State Academic Content Standards, some of which I have included below.

My students understand the basics of how electricity is generated and that it is basically transformed energy produced from turbines rotating. We study at least ten different sources of energy and look at the pros and cons of each one on a

variety of viewpoints. We analyze the positive and negative consequences of human changes to the physical environment including mining. We analyze how all organisms, including humans, (and I would add *especially* humans) cause changes in their ecosystems and how these changes can be beneficial, neutral or detrimental.

Students are expected to be able to explain how the supply of many non-renewable resources is limited and can be extended through reducing, reusing and recycling but cannot be extended indefinitely. Students are asked to investigate ways Earth's renewable resources (e.g., fresh water, air, wildlife and trees) can be maintained. We expect them to go through the process of scientific inquiry including to investigate positive and negative impacts of human activity and technology on the environment. We require they be able to revise an existing design used to solve a problem based on peer review and explain how the solution to one problem may create other problems. We expect all these things from our ten and eleven year old citizens, yet the same government that mandates all these standards of understanding does not seem to be employing the same standards to governmental decision making. There are also economic content standards, but those can not be the driving influence over the decisions being made.

Lastly, I draw upon one of the most important content standards, all citizens have the right and responsibility to vote and influence the decisions of the government. And that is what I am asking today, that more incentives are given to companies wanting to incorporate clean energy sources, not to companies wanting to decimate our country's natural resources.

I invite you to respond to this letter and shed some light on the decision making going in to subsidizing companies like Beard. We would love to hear about the incentives being given to companies who reduce the dependency on coal and other non-renewable energy sources. My students would love to hear about the future jobs they may have some day in the field of clean energy sources. My students and I would love to see government in action making all the standards we teach come to life and not just be lip service for what citizenry should be.

Sincerely,
Katie Combs