



# Ohio Citizen Action

*The premier grassroots mobilizing and organizing team in the Midwest*

## 2017 year-in review



OHIO CITIZEN ACTION \* 614 W. Superior Ave. Cleveland, OH 44113 \* (216) 861-5200 \* [ohiocitizen.org](http://ohiocitizen.org)

## Coal and Energy

We began 2017 celebrating the **reinstatement of Ohio's modest renewable energy and energy efficiency standards** after a two-year freeze, an attempt to extend the freeze and an ultimate veto of the freeze extension by Governor Kasich. Our joy and relief evaporated by March however, when **House Bill 114** was introduced. HB 114 proved even worse than the freeze bill, as it proposed making utility investments in efficiency and renewable energy *voluntary*, essentially gutting the standards while avoiding the political fallout of an outright repeal.

Ohio Citizen Action members and allies:

- Sent 4,089 personal letters
- Made 4,073 calls (or left messages) to lawmakers

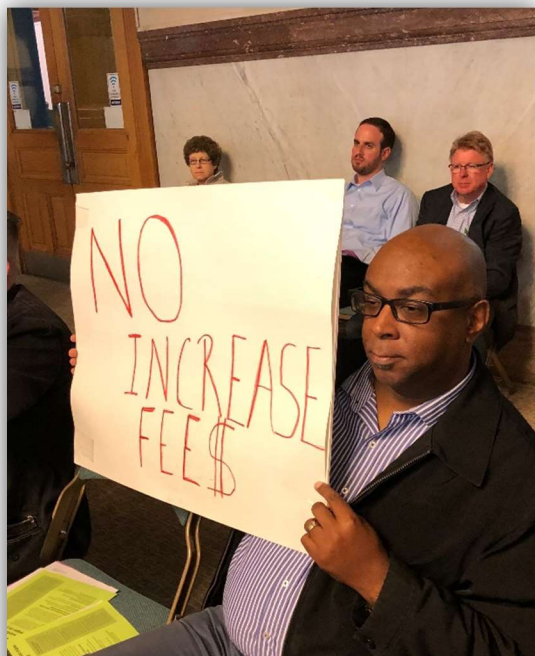
Taking a cue from utilities in other states, FirstEnergy requested a bailout of their Perry II, Davis-Besse and Beaver Valley nuclear plants, through **Senate Bill 128**. Of course they didn't characterize their request as a bailout, instead casting it as a Zero Emissions Credit which incentivized low-carbon energy generation. However, like their coal plants, FirstEnergy's nuclear plants have lost considerable market share to natural gas and renewable energy and remain comparatively more

expensive to operate. **SB 128 would guarantee the utility \$300 million annually to operate the plants in perpetuity.** In our testimony, we argued that if FirstEnergy truly wanted to encourage low-carbon energy generation, they wouldn't ask for a nuclear plant bailout, but would instead stop obstructing policy and market forces that favor energy efficiency and renewable energy.



The Kyger Creek and Clifty Creek coal plants are owned by the Ohio Valley Electric Corporation (OVEC), major shareholders of which include Duke, FirstEnergy, Dayton Power & Light and American Electric Power (AEP). These Eisenhower-era plants were built to supply electricity for the Portsmouth uranium enrichment plant, which shut down in 2001. Despite this fact, Ohio's big four utilities want Ohioans to pay **\$1.4 billion to keep the plants operating until 2030**, citing national security as their reason. Ohio Citizen Action members and allies sent **1,077 personal letters and 367 voice messages** to lawmakers opposing the **OVEC plant bailout proposed in HB 239.**

## Consumer Rights

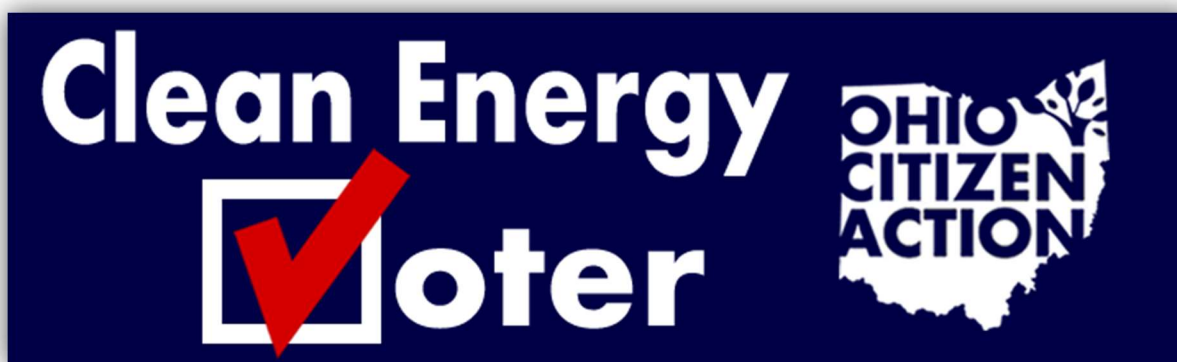


*Yonel Robertson protests the Duke rate hike.  
Photo by Richard Blumberg*

We continued the **fight against increases in residential “fixed fees” or “customer charges”**, requested by Duke and AEP this year. The customer charge goes to the utility that delivers energy to customers, not necessarily the utility that generates the electricity. That means an increase has nothing to do with usage. Ohioans already pay the 17<sup>th</sup> highest electric rates in the nation and we oppose customer charge increases that erode people’s ability to control their bills, particularly burden low-income families and seniors and discourage energy efficiency. This year, **23,170 people submitted official comments** to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio and **more than 280 people attended hearings** in Bucyrus, Marietta, Columbus, Hamilton and Cincinnati opposing the rate increases.

## Civic Engagement

Building upon our successful pilot project last year, we **identified and scored 568 people in four state senate districts** this year. The goal of this work is to **identify “clean energy voters”** who prioritize energy issues when voting and eventually to follow up with and turn out clean energy voters to the polls. After passage of HB 114 in the House, we also published on our website a **Clean Energy Voter scorecard** for legislative votes cast on 2016’s freeze extension bill and HB 114. We will continue adding voting records to this page, so Ohioans can learn if their legislators are *also* clean energy voters.





## Organizational News

- During the year our field canvassers knocked on 176,831 doors, spoke to 95,790 people, collected 32,473 petition signatures and accepted 16,750 contributions. Our phone canvassers followed up with members in 8,667 conversations, collected 4,446 contributions and transferred 1,242 calls directly to decision makers on our campaigns



*Cleveland field canvass staff Michael Steere, Katy Morford, Sarah Savron, Jessica Smith-Szabo, Briana Edgerton, Marlena Luikart, and Anastazia Vanisko.*

- In February, we sent out a small **survey**, gathering feedback on which issues were most important, possible next steps for our civic engagement project and collecting demographic information that will help us to diversify our organization.
- In March we **won a lawsuit against U.S. EPA** over delays in updating federal air toxics rules for 20 different categories of polluter.
- In April, we welcomed new **Ohio Citizen Action Education Fund board member Rosemary Roe**. Ohio Citizen Action Executive Director Rachael Belz also published an **op-ed about the AEP fixed rate request** in the Columbus Dispatch.



- In May, we successfully concluded our **#Appeal4Wheels campaign** and purchased a newer, more reliable vehicle for our Cleveland field canvass.
- In June we sent OCA member Father Neil Pezzulo to Washington D.C. to **lobby against the Regulatory Accountability Act**. We also participated in the **Cincinnati People's Climate Rally** in Cincinnati.

- In July we sent two of our senior staff to the **Backbone Campaign Action Camp** on Vachon Island in Washington state to learn new skills.
- In September we held our **annual board retreat** in Hocking Hills.



- In October, after an inadvertent challenge by an Ohio State Senator last year, we succeeded in sending **field canvassers to all 33 Ohio State Senate districts**. This not only ensures that lawmakers from all over Ohio hear from pro-clean energy constituents, it also builds our membership and political clout.
- In November **Carla Walker** joined the Ohio Citizen Action board.
- In December we ran our most successful **year-end fundraising** campaign ever, exceeding our goal by 32%.



*Ohio Citizen Action board member Carla Walker and Ohio Citizen Action alum Brewster Rhoads at the Cincinnati People's Climate Rally. Photo by Andrea Carter.*

## 2017 BOARD AND STAFF

**OHIO CITIZEN ACTION BOARD OF DIRECTORS:** Anne Wise, M.D. (Cleveland) *President*; Ann Knotek (Cleveland) *Secretary/Treasurer*; Thomas Ferguson (Columbus); Nancy Sullivan (Cincinnati); and Carla Walker (Cincinnati).

**OHIO CITIZEN ACTION SENIOR STAFF:** Rachael Belz (Executive Director); Lynn Scheerhorn (Financial Director); Don Wolcott (Regional Canvass Director); Curt Moultime (Regional Field Canvass Director); Stephen Gabor (Phone Canvass Director); Hali Greene and Meghan Center (Cincinnati Field Canvass Directors); Jessica Smith-Szabo (Cleveland Field Canvass Director); Melissa English (Development Director); Angela Oster (Digital Communications Director); Chris Young (Database Manager); Mark Bisantz (Membership Development Coordinator); Ashlyn Porter (Cincinnati Administrative Assistant); Angela Simon (Cleveland Office Manager).

**OHIO CITIZEN ACTION EDUCATION FUND BOARD OF DIRECTORS** Dick Wittberg (Marietta) *President*; Matthew Currie (Dayton) *Secretary/Treasurer*; Brooke Smith (Cincinnati); Rosemary Roe (Columbus) and Heather Zoller (Cincinnati).

Ohio Citizen Action Education Fund is the 501 c 3 education and research affiliate of Ohio Citizen Action. Its Executive Director is Melissa English.



*Ohio Citizen Action board president Anne Wise and Ohio Citizen Action Education Fund board president Dick Wittberg at the 2017 board retreat.*

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