

# Ohio Legislature Attacks Rights of Nature, Protects Polluters in Budget Bill

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**Toledo, OH:** Ohio Governor Mike DeWine has signed a 2500+ page state budget bill which not only includes provisions attempting to abolish Rights of Nature law in the state of Ohio, but also contains hidden language to enhance protections for industrial agricultural operations, including animal factories and water privatization corporations.

The Ohio legislature and Governor have opted to protect industry and the 'rights' of corporate constituents to pollute while simultaneously stripping the people of their rights to pass local laws and protect the rights of ecosystems that sustain their community. The budget bill also includes statutory provisions that permit and legalize the theft of a community water supply in the interest of corporate profit.

The budget bill states:

- *Nature or any ecosystem does not have standing to participate in or bring an action in any court of common pleas;*
- *No person, on behalf of or representing nature or an ecosystem, shall bring an action in any court of common pleas;*
- *In a civil action for nuisances involving agricultural activities, it is a complete defense if:*
  - *The agricultural activities were conducted within an (...) agricultural district or on land devoted exclusively to agricultural use (...);*
  - *The agricultural activities were established within the agricultural district prior to the plaintiff's activities or interest on which the action is based;*
  - *The plaintiff was not involved in agricultural production; and*
  - *The agricultural activities were not in conflict with federal, state, and local laws and rules relating to the alleged nuisances or were conducted in accordance with generally accepted agriculture practices*

Markie Miller of TSW stated, "this sneaky and seemingly innocent language values, above everything, corporate 'rights' to destroy the natural life sources we all depend on, for immediate profit, the consequences be damned."

In addition, the General Assembly has quietly installed significant new statutory powers in the Ohio Dept of Natural Resources to issue permits legalizing the theft of aquifer water, which when combined with the destruction of the rights of nature, seriously cripples a community's only avenue to exert any control or protection over the privatization of their water source.

"Do legislators and the governor understand what they're doing by siding with corporations and making it illegal for people to protect the systems that support all life? The so-called 'right to farm' part of this bill has nothing to do with farming and everything to do with letting animal factories continue using Lake Erie as a free toilet. The stakes are high and we will defend the only Earth we have" said Mike Ferner of Advocates for a Clean Lake Erie.

These legislative actions demonstrate the recent pattern in Ohio of revoking the democratic rights of citizens while legalizing destructive corporate harms.

Hilary Tore of TSW commented, "this budget bill is a clear violation of Ohio's single-subject law, yet the legislature continues to cherry-pick which laws they want to follow. A government is created by the people to protect the people and their rights. We don't create government to harm us, yet that is what we have."

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