

# Testimony before the Ohio House Public Utilities Committee

## Proponent Testimony for HB87

Submitted by:  
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To Chairman Stautberg, Representatives Goyal and Grossman, and members of the Public Utilities Committee, I thank you for your time and allowing me to testify.

Last summer I testified before this very committee in support of HB 344. I spent hours researching and writing a 5 page testimony detailing my family's and my community's suffering at the hands of Ohio American Water and its executives. Many others testified as well, spending their time and resources to show how much this issue meant to them. This committee, in its wisdom, passed HB 344. Here's what ultimately came of it all...NOTHING! It was all just a big waste of time. HB 344 never came up for a vote in the Ohio House. And who PAID for this colossal waste of time? I DID! I paid for my time, I paid for your time, and I even paid for the time of OAW's witness. Now, I don't mind spending my time and money on this issue because it's important to me. I don't even mind paying for your time. I know that you work long hours and don't get paid a lot for the work you do. What really irks me is that I had to pay for Ohio American Water's witness to come here and tell you why they need their money and even ask for an automatic push through of rate hikes, a law which would of course be disastrous for OAW's customers. My neighbors and I paid for his time, and I guarantee you it wasn't cheap. Under current law, OAW and companies like them are allowed to pass on 100% of its rate hike fees to their customers. These fees include the cost for lawyers, studies, and witnesses. We PAY so they can gouge us even more! THIS IS NOT RIGHT! House Bill 87 would limit the amount they can get back from their customers to 50%. I don't think that's too much to ask. It's only a small step in relieving the undue burden OAW places on their customers every day, but it is a step in the right direction.

Let's have some fun with numbers shall we? I like supporting facts and figures, and I assume you do to. According to the Columbus Utilities website, the average residential family in 2011 using 30 CCF's of water per 3 month period will pay about \$125. For the record, a CCF is approximately 750 gallons of water. Do you know how much I have to pay Ohio American Water if I used 30 CCF's in 3 months? \$466! Almost 4 times as much as a person using Columbus water! I'm not making up these numbers, you can check them out for yourself! Now

of course, we don't use that much water in our family...we can't afford to. I looked at my water bills for the last 12 months, and on average, our family uses 14 gallons of water per day per person. Most of you used 14 gallons of water 10 minutes after you woke up. Flush toilet, take a shower, brush your teeth...there's your 14 gallons. Now try using no more water until the next day and see how hard it is. I for one am tired of skimping on every drop of water. I'm tired of dragging 5 gallons buckets of water into our house from our rain barrel to flush our toilets. I'm tired of taking 2 minute showers. I'm tired of the disgusting smell emanating from our bathroom because 12 hours worth of urine is in the toilet. Sorry to be so graphic, but you need to hear this. That is what our family goes through every day **JUST TO BE ABLE TO AFFORD WATER!** Seriously, when you go home today, check your water bill and see how much water you use and how much you pay a month. Here's another fun fact; we pay a \$9.51 service charge every month, which OAW tried to raise to \$11.39. Again, go home, check your water bill and see how much your service charge is. Some of you will find you don't even **HAVE** a service charge! Others of you may pay \$2 or \$3. We pay \$9.51. That's every month, not every 3 months.

Some of you will say, "Well Dave, sure you pay 4 times as much for your water, but maybe it's really high quality water". I can assure you it isn't. It leaves a disgusting pink film in our toilets and showers. I called last year to complain about our water quality. I was told that the pink film is caused from bacteria and if there's bacteria at the water's source, then it will be there in our water. To that I say, **WHAT THE HELL ARE WE PAYING THEM FOR?!** Isn't that why we pay our water company...to get impurities out of our water? So does that also mean if there's cyanide at the water's source that we'll have cyanide in our water?

The problem of course is lack of competition. If my phone company raises my rates by 20% every year, I get a new phone company. If my natural gas carrier raises my rates every year, I can get a new gas carrier. If I see a gas station charging \$13 a gallon, I go to the gas station down the street that charges \$3.50 a gallon. However, I have **NO CHOICE** who I get my water from. If I want running water in my house, I have to get it from OAW, and I have to pay their exorbitant prices. Remember, I'm paying almost 4 times the amount for water that a Columbus resident does. It's like I'm getting charged \$13 per gallon of gas and I have no choice in where I get it. If we can't get better regulation of the water industry, maybe we need **DEREGULATION**. If OAW had **ANY** competition, I can guarantee that **EVERY SINGLE FAMILY** in my neighborhood would switch carriers! Such is our disgust with the way OAW has treated us.

Greed is destroying America. We've seen it in companies like Enron, we see it in businesses who ship jobs overseas so they can pay their workers \$2 an hour instead of \$15, all so they can pay executives \$20 million dollars a year, we've seen it on Wall Street, and we've even seen it in individuals who try to buy a bigger house than they can afford and end up in foreclosure. Ohio American Water is destroying our community. We can't sell our houses because no one wants to move to an area where they will spend \$2000 a year on a basic necessity like water. Almost no one in our community waters their lawn because they can't afford it, and a bad looking yard only further destroys our home values. Our friends down the street have taken their house off the market after a year and a half of receiving no viable offers.

Let's face it...Ohio American Water and companies like them are THIEVES! No, they don't break into our homes in the middle of the night and steal our TV's, but they rob us every month nonetheless. They rob us every time we flush a toilet, take a shower, or wash clothes. They are thieves, and we, the residents of Huber Ridge have no power to do anything about it. But YOU have the power to do something. You can pass HB 87.

Last summer when I testified, I gave an emotional, heartfelt plea. This time, I'm just ANGRY! DO SOMETHING! Don't let HB 87 be stalled until the 130<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. Don't let OAW stall it and don't push it aside as unimportant. It's not unimportant to the 145,000 Ohioans who are suffering under the oppressive burden that OAW and Aqua Ohio are putting on them. Let me tell you how important it is to me...today is my birthday. I had plans to spend time with my wife, but I felt a burden to come here today and testify. You had over a year to pass HB 344 and ultimately nothing happened. Please don't wait on HB 87. Every day you delay is another day of victory for Ohio American Water.

If you ask me, this one is a no brainer. On one hand you have a company based in New Jersey with a history of jacking up prices on their customers in every state where they buy a water utility, and on the other hand you have 145,000 suffering, AND VOTING, Ohioans. It doesn't take a genius to see that when OAW is charging 4 times as much for water, and when they frequently ask for rate increases as much as 60% that there are some shady business practices going on. Please, vote FOR HB 87. You are the only voice we have. Thank you.