



**Minority Leader
C. Allison Russo**

September 11, 2023

The Honorable Dave Yost
Office of the Attorney General
30 E. Broad St., 14th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

RE: Alleged fraudulent use of people's identity in the Oil and Gas Land Management Commission (OGLMC) public comment process

Dear Attorney General Yost:

Identity theft in Ohio is a serious crime—a crime you and your office have often warned the public against many times. It's come to my attention that this crime may have been perpetrated on dozens of Ohioans who say their names were used without their permission on letters sent to the Oil and Gas Land Management Commission (OGLMC), urging oil and gas exploration in Ohio's state parks. Without a doubt, any process allowing or denying drilling and fracking in our pristine state parks is controversial, but these recent allegations suggest the process has been overrun by scammers and out-of-state groups trying to rig OGLMC's approval process.

I am requesting that you and your office prudently and swiftly investigate this matter to determine if any criminal misconduct has occurred. Recent reporting in the [Cleveland Plain Dealer](#) suggests that dozens of Ohioans have been victims of this fraud, and these individuals deserve to know who is behind this act and what other personal information is being improperly used in the public domain. Moreover, a thorough investigation is imperative so Ohioans have confidence that any state process meant to include public input is, in fact, functioning to reflect public opinion and not another conduit for public corruption.

Allowing the OGLMC approval process to be overrun by potential fraud is unacceptable, and the Attorney General's Office, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), and the commission should not passively stand by and await more individuals to discover their names and other personal information were used to author fake public comments. To this end, I am also recommending to the ODNR Director and the OGLMC Clerk that they direct the commission to deny any pending leasing nominations currently being considered in regards to oil and gas exploration in our state parks until your investigation is complete. ODNR should also individually verify the letters submitted during this eligibility window, and if they cannot be verified, the submissions should be deleted from the public record and included in your investigation.

I appreciate your urgency on this matter as we all seek to improve public confidence in our state agencies and ensure criminal activity does not permeate our state approval processes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. Allison Russo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

C. Allison Russo
Minority Leader
Ohio House District 7