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**Ohio House Government Accountability & Oversight Committee
Senate Bill 44 / Campaign Finance Reports
Written Testimony of Dennis R. Hetzel
President & Executive Director / Ohio News Media Association
November 29, 2017**

On behalf of the members of the Ohio News Media Association, which represents newspaper and digital news outlets across the state, I thank committee members for this opportunity to express support for Senate Bill 44, sponsored by Senator Frank LaRose. This legislation would create greater transparency and accountability for local government elections and allow local media outlets to provide better, more-detailed coverage of elections across the state.

SB 44 expands the number of political entities and candidates that can file campaign finance statements electronically. This includes the State Board of Education, local government offices, as well as county political parties and PACs. These filings would fall under the same standards for electronic filing that are currently in place for most legislative and statewide candidates.

This is a pro-transparency piece of legislation that would create consistency between local government races and elections for general assembly and statewide offices. Given the influence and importance of money in politics, it seems self-evident to utilize modern technology so that all citizens, including constituents and journalists, have ready access to these reports.

If anything, we encourage you to move the digital filing requirement from voluntary to mandatory at some point in the future with adequate funding and training support. It should not take much technical literacy to fill out an online report and transmit it to the Secretary of State. The Legislature also should pro-actively encourage charter municipalities to adopt these requirements and make electronic filing mandatory for General Assembly candidates.

Thank you for your consideration.