

I am the current Director of the Fulton County Board of Elections, and have held this position since 2008. I am also a member of the Elections Taskforce Group under the Ohio Association of Elections Officials, which looks at long-term legislation needed to provide Open, Honest and Fair Elections in Ohio. This group is also working to determine how Ohio Elections can run more efficiently, while maintaining the integrity, security and accuracy that Ohio is known for.

Therefore, I, along with the members of the Board of Elections and the Fulton County Commissioners, are proponents of SB21, which gives the Board of Elections ability and flexibility to reduce the number of election workers in polling places utilizing electronic poll books.

Small counties, as well as large counties, are using polling locations that house more than one precinct. In Fulton County, 10 of the 17 locations in use, house more than one precinct. Having multi precinct locations, reduces duplication of materials and processes, provides adequate parking and ADA accessibility and provides a convenient location for voters. In the past eight years, absentee voting (in person and by mail) has increased, which means fewer voters are choosing to vote on Election Day. In addition, the implementation of electronic poll books dramatically decreases the voter check in time and overall has streamlined the voting process in a positive manner. The use of electronic poll books drastically changed the jobs performed by the election workers, and four workers per precinct are not needed to efficiently run Election Day during most elections.

SB21 would give Boards the flexibility to staff polling locations as needed while always maintaining the bi-partisan requirement for election workers. Certainly, in small elections, where only one question is on the ballot, or a special primary to fill a vacancy, or elections where renewals of longstanding levies are on the ballot, low turnout is very predictable. The one-size fits all approach is antiquated and does not reflect the technology upgrades Boards have implemented over the recent years. There are elections and polling locations where it would be prudent for the Board to assign four or more workers to each precinct due to high voter turnout or highly contested races. SB21 would allow us to use our resources at the optimal level for each election, and that makes us good stewards of public funds.

I strongly urge the passage of SB21 and would like to thank Senator Eucker, the co-sponsors and the entire Ohio Senate for the continued work in helping to improve the efficiency, transparency and quality of Ohio Elections.

Melanie J. Gilders, Director

Fulton County Board of Elections