

My name is Susan Haas and I'm a resident of Hopewell Township in eastern Licking County.

I am testifying in opposition to HJR 19, because my personal experiences gathering signatures for the Fair Districts initiative show that HJR 19 would effectively quash citizens' ability to bring a measure to the ballot.

Volunteers with good government groups spent eight months collecting signatures for Fair Districts. This effort was an important factor in raising awareness of gerrymandering among the public and encouraging the General Assembly to act. But it's equally important to note that the signature gathering effort fell significantly short of what would have been required to bring the measure to the voters. While we were confident that our experiences over the summer of 2017 would have allowed us to gather signatures more efficiently in 2018 and ultimately bring Fair Districts to the voters, this is obviously unproved.

As a volunteer with the League of Women Voters of Licking County, I personally collected about 600 signatures for Fair Districts. It was a very good day if I gathered 20 signatures in an hour. Most of the time, volunteer efforts yielded more in the range of 15 signatures an hour – in other words, those 600 signatures represented 40 hours of volunteer time, not including driving to and from venues that were sometimes more than an hour from my home. While I don't know how many of the signatures I collected were valid, statewide figures from in-house validation showed that roughly one-third of signatures failed in-house validation, meaning that name and address did not match voter rolls. In-house validators could not compare the actual signatures, so the real world validity was most likely somewhat less had we submitted the measure. By extrapolation, if a canvasser can collect an average of ten valid signatures per hour, getting a measure onto the ballot *currently* requires over 40,000 canvasser hours. An effort on this scale strongly favors initiatives that start out of the gate with massive amounts of cash to hire paid canvassers.

The vast majority of the signatures I and others gathered were at outdoor events such as festivals, concerts, parades and farmers' markets, where people congregate in public spaces. The commons as it existed when Ohio first became a state, has not existed in most towns for over 50 years. With the exception of special events, people generally congregate in privately owned spaces, indoors in cooler weather. Almost without exception, these venues have blanket policies against issue-related activities. Many of them are owned by out-of-state landlords. With Fair Districts, our signature collection effort effectively ended with the end of the holiday parade season in mid-December. With the exception of these parades, our efforts to collect signatures dropped to near zero once outdoor temperatures dropped into the 50s. Citizens don't tend to congregate outdoors during cool weather, and those who are walking by aren't willing to spend several minutes standing in the cold. Arnold Schwarzenegger famously welcomed us to promote this May's Issue 1 at "The Arnold" festival, but this was the exception rather than the rule. An event promoter of lesser renown would likely have had less ability to persuade a building owner to allow signature gathering. Requiring signatures to be gathered between October and April would make the initiative process effectively available only to large corporate owners of shopping malls, convention centers and office buildings, or to proponents

of issues so strongly favored by real estate magnates that they would waive their ordinary policies against canvassing.

HJR 19 seems to be an attempt by dark money and out-of-state interests to restrict the ballot process to questions they themselves favor. It is deeply anti-democratic, and I urge the Committee to reject this measure.