

APRI OHIO STATE

December 6, 2018

Written Opposition Testimony to HJR 19
House Committee on Government Accountability and Oversight

Akron/Canton

Chairman Blessing and esteemed members of the committee:

Dayton

Thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony today in opposition to House Joint Resolution 19 on behalf of Ohio A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI). **APRI is an organization of Black Trade Unionists who work for voting rights, racial equality, and economic justice with nine chapters across the Buckeye State.**

Cincinnati

Ohio's Constitution is the people's document, and APRI understands that initiatives and referendums are an invaluable way to bring important policy issues to the voters through the ballot box. We are firmly opposed to HJR 19, because it would create severe obstacles for grassroots organizations to participate in direct democracy, all but guaranteeing that only issues backed by big-monied, out-of-state groups would make it on the ballot.

Cleveland

Franklin Co.

It is not necessary to make the Constitutional Amendment process harder. Like many grassroots groups, we conduct get-out-the-vote efforts, and we were pleased to see record voter turnout in the last election. But we would be remiss if we did not point out that Ohio voters have already made an onerous process harder, by increasing the necessary number of signatures by more than 40 percent.

Toledo


Trumbull Co.

We oppose limiting signature collection to 180 days, because volunteer-led campaigns need more time to train and recruit volunteers as well as to collect the signatures. Similarly, requiring that the petitions are due in April would require that the bulk of signature gathering would occur in winter, creating additional obstacles for grassroots groups. We also oppose increasing the vote passage requirement to 60%, because most statewide elections are decided within a few percentage points.

Youngstown

Finally, we ask that the Ohio General Assembly recognize that lame duck is not the time to change how the people of Ohio can affect the Ohio Constitution. We would be interested in future policy discussions about how to make it easier for citizen initiatives. We hope that you will not move HJR 19 forward but rather give the next General Assembly the chance to truly defend and preserve Ohio's legacy of direct democracy.

Thank you. You can reach me at 614-800-9629.


André Washington, President
APRI Ohio State



"A community is democratic only when the humblest and weakest person can enjoy the highest civil, economic, and social rights that the biggest and most powerful possess."

-A. Philip Randolph