



## **Representative Kent Smith**

Ohio House District 8

### Federalism Committee Testimony on HB 475

February 5, 2020

Chairman Becker, Vice Chairman Stoltzfus, Ranking Member Miller and members of the House Federalism Committee. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to explain why passing House Bill 475 into law is in Ohio's best interest.

This legislation, called the Ohio Should Know Act, is designed to mandate the "norm" of releasing financial records by requiring candidates for President and Vice-President to submit their five most recent federal income tax returns to the Secretary of State for publication in order to appear on the Ohio ballot.

Consider the possible scenario of a billionaire candidate from the coast who has invested in private prisons and coal mining to make his billions. Or a candidate who relied on financing from nations with less than stellar human rights records to finance his fortune. Or a candidate who invented Wall Street computing and used his fortune to buy failing media assets and finance constitutional reform efforts. Do you think that how they made their billions might impact how they lead this nation? This Committee needs to consider the question "Should Ohio Know"?

We are not asking candidates or campaigns to do any extra work as all of these tax returns currently exist. Just file them with the Secretary of State's office and let the public examine it for themselves.

When Politico asked a question about the President's business interests and arrangements in a poll with a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points, a majority of voters considered the topic an important or top priority for Congress to investigate to determine whether they are conflicting with his presidential duties.<sup>1</sup> (#5 from co-sponsor request)

The Washington Post / ABC News asked the "Do you want to Know" question about America's 45th President, a vast majority of Americans (74%) including a majority of Republicans (53%) said Yes.<sup>2</sup>

Ohio would not be alone in this effort as (According to data from the National Conference of State Legislatures), 21 states have considered legislation with similar requirements for appearing on their primary or general ballots in 2019 alone.<sup>3</sup>

Without these documents, Ohio voters lack critical information on candidates who vie to occupy the highest office in the land. Before Ohioans cast their votes for the next President and Vice President. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee, we would be happy to answer questions at this time.

1. <https://www.politico.com/f/?id=00000169-bb69-dc6b-a96d-bfe98f2d0001>
2. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2017/01/22/trump-wont-release-his-tax-returns-because-people-dont-care-top-adviser-says/?tid=ik\\_inline\\_manual\\_5](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2017/01/22/trump-wont-release-his-tax-returns-because-people-dont-care-top-adviser-says/?tid=ik_inline_manual_5)
3. <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/elections-legislation-database.aspx>