

DAN RAMOS

State Representative (2011-2018)

Chairman Coley, Vice-Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and Members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee.

I am Dan Ramos. I served in the Ohio House of Representatives from Lorain County from 2011 to 2018. At that time, I made a personal policy that whenever anyone from Lorain County asks me to be in the Statehouse, I will be there. To that end, my friend and former colleague from the House, and now your colleague, the Honorable Senator Nathan Manning asked that I share my opinions on Senate Bill 233, legislation that would alter Ohio's so-called "sore loser" statute to allow a candidate to stand for an office even if they ran for a different office in a partisan primary in the event of a vacancy in said office.

I thank him for his invitation to return to these illustrious halls.

I stand here as a proponent of Senate Bill 233 for a very simple reason. I believe that the voting public should have the inalienable right to choose whomever they believe would serve them best for every elected office. Ohio Revised Code 3513.04 infringes on the public's right to choose whomever they please to serve in elected office on their behalf simply because a potential candidate had run for another office in the past. I am here in support of SB 233 because it would preserve the right of the public to choose their officials. I am not here to defend the right of politicians seeking higher office.

The language in question was added initially in an elections omnibus bill which changed 31 other sections of code and added a new section, in addition to the one dealt with in this legislation. In the interest of full disclosure, I did serve in the House of Representatives when this legislation passed, I voted against it, but was unaware of this specific provision when I did so. My vote was based on my opinion on the original jurisdiction of the Ohio Supreme Court on challenges to initiative and referendum petitions, which is not an issue discussed in the legislation before you.

This section's proposed removal in this legislation would in no way hinder Ohio's sore loser law, as it would still prevent a person who ran for a partisan primary and lost from running as an independent or write in for the *same* office. I believe this limitation is right and just to the public as they have already had the opportunity to choose whether that same person should hold elected office and they chose not to elect them. Senate Bill 233 only affects individuals who were not already on the ballot for the office they now seek.

Although the voting public may think twice about elected a candidate who only recently stood for a different office, it should be them, not the ORC, who determines their suitability to serve in a new office.

This legislation was written by the Senator, as I understand it after a number of candidates seeking to fill a vacancy on the ballot for the office of Mayor of Lorain were disqualified based upon this section of code. They were, prior to the 2019 election, not legally allowed to run for the office of Mayor because they had run for other local offices in that year's primary. I was, at one time, interested in that office myself, was legally qualified to serve, but ultimately decided not to run. I could bore this committee with the long version of that story, but my intention in bringing it up is only to make certain that this committee is aware that that specific issue has been resolved based upon the current standing of the code, the vacancy was legally filled, the election was held, and that passage of this legislation will in no way affect who will become the Mayor of the City of Lorain in January. That is all now in the past.

I believe that Senate Bill 233 will protect the rights of the voters to choose their elected officials in the future. I believe it is paramount that this right be protected in every way possible by our laws. I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to mention that the same right of the public to choose their elected leaders is also infringed by appointments rather than special elections for vacancies, by imposing an age limit on the service of Judges, and yes, by legislative term limits.

To be clear, I am in no way suggesting that these issues be added into this specific legislation, but believe preserving the right for the public to choose their elected officials is paramount. Future debate on that subject, of course, is the prerogative of the elected members of this body and the public.

I want to reiterate that I believe this legislation goes a long way to protecting those rights and believe the General Assembly would do good work to protect voters' rights to choose their elected officials by passing SB 233 in its current form.

I would be happy to answer any questions this committee may have.

It is, as always, an honor to speak before this body.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Ramos", with a stylized flourish at the end.

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