Interested Party Testimony
Aaron Ockerman
Ohio Association of Election Officials
House Bill 64

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Driehaus and members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Aaron Ockerman, and I am Executive Director of the Ohio Association of Election Officials (OAEO). OAEO is a bipartisan organization that represents Ohio's 88 county boards of elections and staff. I am here to offer my association's support for the inclusion of two budget related matters into HB 64.

OAEO would respectfully request an appropriation of $1.2 million to the Ohio Secretary of State for purposes of mailing out absentee ballot applications statewide for the 2016 general election.   In recent years, some county boards of elections had sent these mailings out individually. This resulted in a patchwork of inconsistent mailings around the state. Secretary Husted intervened by using federal Help America Vote Funds to mail the applications statewide for the general elections in 2012 and 2014, but that money has expired.

During the 130th General Assembly the legislature passed SB 205. SB 205 prohibited local boards from mailing unsolicited applications, but requires the Secretary of State to undertake the mailings in even numbered general elections if, and only if, the General Assembly appropriates the money to do so. While our stated preference to the legislature at the time that SB 205 was being considered was to make the mailings mandatory for every general election (voters have become accustomed to

getting them every year), we nevertheless support the appropriation of money to conduct the mailing in 2016.

The second item I wish to discuss is funding for electronic poll books. For those of you not familiar with electronic poll books, I will briefly describe them. Certainly you are all familiar with paper poll books used at precincts on Election Day. These are the signature books that contain the name, address and signature of every voter in a given precinct. Voters are required to sign the book in order to vote a regular ballot on Election Day.

Technology has made these paper poll books obsolete. Electronic poll books replace paper poll books and offer voters and election officials numerous safeguards and efficiencies. Among the many are:

- Saving counties money by:
  - Reducing paper and paper costs (Montgomery County has eliminated 250,000 sheets of paper per year by moving to e-poll books).
  - Allowing election officials to upload updated signatures and voter information directly into their voter registration databases as opposed to doing so manually. The process that normally takes weeks and hours of manpower to complete can be completed in minutes or hours resulting in tremendous cost savings and efficiencies.
- Allowing poll workers to scan a drivers' license as a form of identification, eliminating the chance that the voter will be misidentified. Other forms of ID are still acceptable and can be easily checked using the e-poll book.

- Voters sign the electronic poll book directly, eliminating the chance of signing on the wrong line or not signing at all.
- Allowing poll workers to look up voters and direct them to the correct precinct and location by having access to the voter rolls for the whole county rather than just one precinct. Voting location information can be printed from the poll book and given to the voter.
- Speeding up the check in process to less than 30 seconds per voter, greatly eliminating long lines.

While the benefits are great, many counties are unable to afford this technology based on their severely restricted budgets. An investment by the state of $15 million would purchase these devices for every county and reimburse the forward thinking counties that have already made this acquisition. Given the state's emphasis on uniformity, we feel that a statewide purchase is warranted and will ensure a consistent check-in process and voting experience for voters around the state. Additionally, leveraging the state's purchasing power will reduce costs for cash-strapped counties and provide the most "bang for the buck." Under legislation passed last General Assembly, the state is certifying electronic poll books. Thus, counties can choose from a list of pre-vetted products that meet high standards of functionality.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee might have.