



COUNTY OF LAKE

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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DANIEL P. TROY

TESTIMONY OF LAKE COUNTY COMMISSIONER DANIEL P. TROY on SB 135 – HOUSE FINANCE

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Finance Committee, I am Daniel Troy, Lake County Commissioner and the current President of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio. I am also a former member of the Ohio General Assembly, having served 7 terms in the Ohio House, and 6 of those 7 terms as a member of this House Finance and Appropriations Committee. I am here today to ask for your support of SB 135, a measure that would provide \$114.5 million in state support to assist our counties with the acquisition of new voting systems.

No one can argue with the fact that our system of free and open elections is an integral part of our system of government. What takes place on Election Day is the very core of our democracy; that is, the periodic selection OF and BY the people of those individuals that are charged with carrying out the responsibilities of the government FOR the people.

We certainly realize that “ground zero” of this process (from choosing township trustees to the President of the United States) takes place at our 88 Boards of Elections offices in Ohio; and we are all too well aware that the primary responsibility for funding the process rests with the Board of County Commissioners. By and large, the members of our Association take that responsibility very seriously, and have done their best not to shortchange this basic component of our democracy. But, we are now facing the daunting, and expensive, task of replacing elections machinery that is fast nearing the end of its reliability to perform its function. Article 1, Section 4 of the United States Constitution states that the Times, Places, and Manner of holding Elections...shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations.... There is no mention of counties having responsibility for the “Manner” in which elections are conducted. But, we know that train left the station a long time ago, as we as county governments have historically borne the lion’s share of the cost of conducting elections in Ohio. What we are, however, happily seeing here today, is a true partnership between us and the State of Ohio to address this important issue.

We appreciate the willingness of the General Assembly to work with our Association and the Ohio Association of Election’s Officials to address this election administration infrastructure need. It is certainly in the best interest of our citizens and our democracy. We thank Senator LaRose for his sponsorship of SB 135 and Representatives Blessing and Arndt for managing this legislation before the House.

The pressure on county budgets to provide for the myriad components (equipment, personnel, registration, training, and now the minimization of security risks) of conducting elections has been increasing at a rate greater than our revenues.

We do truly appreciate this partnership to assist us in that mission, and we certainly hope it is just a beginning to a greatly enhanced relationship between the State and county governments in Ohio to insure the continued provision of a key element of our civilization – free and open elections.