

Proponent Testimony

Senate Bill 21

Chairman Blessing, Ranking Member Clyde, and members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee:

My name is Tony Perlatti. I am the Deputy Director of the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections and a member of the Ohio Association of Elections Officials' Legislative Committee. I would like to offer both the Association's and Cuyahoga County Board of Elections' support for Senate Bill 21.

Senate Bill 21 provides boards of elections with the ability to more appropriately staff polling locations based on the number of precincts contained within multi-precinct polling locations as well as the type of election that is being conducted.

Currently, Revised Code Section 3501 requires boards of elections to appoint four (4) precinct election officials per precinct in a polling location. This Code Section also allows for boards of elections to reduce this appointment requirement from four (4) to two (2) precinct election officials per precinct in special elections only. Proposed Senate Bill 21 expands this precinct election official reduction to all election types.

The calculated and sensible reduction in precinct election official staffing is made possible by the use of electronic pollbooks and the popularity of no-fault absentee voting. Electronic pollbooks have absolutely revolutionized and modernized the voting experience for voters and precinct election officials.

Checking in voters on Election Day once took several minutes per voter and now has been reduced to about a minute per voter on account of electronic pollbooks. This reduction in time is primarily attributed to precinct election officials being able to scan a voter's driver's license or state identification card and immediately view the correct voter record instead of the previous method of flipping through large books of registered voters to find the appropriate voter record. This functionality, in conjunction with the electronic pollbooks ability to efficiently administer centralized voter check-ins, has drastically reduced the amount of time voters wait in line on Election Day.

Centralized voter check-in has eliminated the need for segregated precinct tables and allows voters to come to one check-in area and receive their correct ballot from any of the precinct election officials operating an electronic pollbook. This is often referred to as "any line, any time voting" and removes the ability of voters to stand in the wrong check-in line when they appear at their correct polling location. It is similar to waiting in line at the bank, there is one line and any open teller can assist the next customer. In the May 8, 2018 Primary Election, Cuyahoga County utilized three-hundred and fifty-six (356) polling locations. Seventy (70) polling locations hosted one (1) precinct and the remaining two-hundred and eighty-six (286) hosted multiple precincts that took advantage of the centralized voter check-in process.

Electronic pollbooks have simplified the administrative duties for precinct election officials and no-fault absentee voting has reduced the volume of voters precinct election officials encounter on Election Day. In Cuyahoga County, on average 30% of voters cast their ballot prior to Election Day by voting absentee. In the May 8, 2018 Primary Election, Cuyahoga County had

almost a 24% overall voter turnout with a little over 34% percent of the vote being cast by absentee ballot prior to Election Day. For the May 8, 2018 Primary Election, Cuyahoga County had about 137,500 regular ballots cast at the polls on Election Day which averaged out to about 11 voters per precinct per hour. A manageable workload for precinct election officials utilizing electronic pollbooks.

Cuyahoga County had nine-hundred seventy-five (975) precincts assigned to three-hundred and fifty-six (356) polling locations in the May 8, 2018 Primary Election. The smallest polling location housed one (1) precinct and the largest polling location housed twelve (12) precincts. To comply with Revised Code Section 3501, Cuyahoga County was required to hire, train and appoint 3,900 precinct election officials for the May 8, 2018 Primary Election. This is a daunting task. Cuyahoga County typically has about 20% of the precinct election officials assigned to a training class either not show up or fail the assessment given at the end of class. This increases the number of precinct election officials recruited to meet compliance. Cuyahoga County also appoints six (6) precinct election officials to single precinct polling locations to execute Election Day operations which also increases the recruitment numbers. Lastly, Cuyahoga County hires and trains additional precinct election officials equal to 10% above the 3,900 needed for compliance to cover precinct election officials who call-off or do not show up for their assignments on Election Day. In total, Cuyahoga County needs to hire and train approximately 5,000 precinct election officials to meet the staffing requirements of the Revised Code in a countywide election.

Of the three-hundred and fifty-six (356) polling locations utilized in the May 8, 2018 Primary Election, eighteen (18) locations had five (5) or more precincts assigned to the location. This consisted of forty-eight (48) precincts staffed by four-hundred and eighty-four (484) precinct election officials. The polling location with twelve (12) precincts had forty-eight (48) precinct election officials alone. Cuyahoga County could have easily reduced over one-hundred (100) precinct election officials from these eighteen (18) polling locations and still executed an excellent election in these locations. This would have saved the Cuyahoga County taxpayers at least \$20,000 in wages and training expenses.

Senate Bill 21 sets a new hiring floor for precinct election officials and does not prevent boards of elections from increasing staffing needs as deemed necessary. While all county boards of elections are governed by the same set of operating rules and laws, the operational needs by county can and do vary. Senate Bill 21 affords the counties the ability to adjust to meet the needs of their respective county dynamics.

Boards of elections, just like voters, do not want long lines on Election Day, or inefficient and ineffective use of taxpayer dollars. Senate Bill 21 takes into account the efficiencies found by using electronic pollbooks and allows election administrators to better manage Election Day operations with the fiscal responsibilities entrusted to them.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your and the committee's time and attention to this bill and my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee might have.