

Chairman Blessing, and Government Accountability & Oversight committee members:

I have been a non-paid grassroots organizer for 3 consecutive local ballot initiatives, for the Columbus Community Bill of Rights, to give Columbus citizens the right to have a say in what comes into their community, particularly regarding the oil & gas fracking and frack waste industry.

As you are aware, the Ohio General Assembly has been hard at work adopting and passing laws which preempt local self governance regarding oil & gas, gun control, plastic bag bans, minimum wages, puppy mills, traffic light cameras, etc., etc., etc.

With no public campaign finance control or corporate lobbying restrictions, We, the People, have been hard pressed to even have a Vote in protecting our communities from corporate harms and state government overreach.

HJR 19 takes away current citizens' rights regarding initiative and referendum. Herbert S. Bigelow, a minister from Cincinnati fought long and hard to bring this right to Ohioans. He was attacked, reviled, and beaten to win this right for us, and now the sponsors and proponents of HJR 19 want to make it harder for citizens to initiate and referendum law: 1. By giving us time limits, where there have been none; 2. Required turn-in date of April 1, where folks will be required to gather signatures during the cold and harsh days of winter; and 3. HJR 19 undermines Ohio voters by requiring us to get 60% of votes rather than a simple majority, that you, as Ohio law makers, retain for yourselves.

These Amendments are regressive, unfair and smack of authoritarianism.

I worked alongside the fair districts/ fair elections petitioners and the criminal justice reform state wide ballot initiative petitioners. While some organizers were paid, the vast majority of workers were unpaid volunteers, dedicated to the betterment of Ohio.

Corporate owners and the powers-that-be do not want citizens to rock the boat of their well oiled machine. With the new restrictions of HJR 19, the only entity that could get a constitutional amendment on the ballot would be a corporate driven initiative with deep pockets.

Eventually you'll be termed out of the State House, and unless you become a lobbyist, perhaps you'll want to have access to this hard won Initiative & referendum law, earned by blood sweat & tears over 100 years ago.

No one wants a right taken away, diminished. I humbly request that you join us, We the People and Stand for our right to Initiate and referendum law.

My suggestions:

Unlimited Time to gather required number of signatures;

Simple Majority;

Public Campaign Finance Reform.

Period.

We Stand to Protect our Democratic Right to Initiative & referendum. We respectfully request that you Vote No on HJR 19.

Ohio voters will hold you accountable.

Thank you.

Carolyn Harding

