



**County
Commissioners
Association of Ohio**

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May 23, 2017

To: Members of the Ohio Senate Finance General Government and Agency Review
Subcommittee
From: Kerry Metzger - Tuscarawas County Commissioner
Re: Substitute HB 49 – State Biennial Budget

Chairman Jordan, Vice Chair O'Brien and members of the General Government and Agency Review Subcommittee, my name is Kerry Metzger and I am a Tuscarawas County Commissioner. I wish to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to urge the Senate to include language in HB 49 that establishes a state/county partnership for the replacement of Ohio's aging voting equipment.

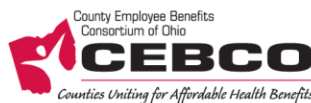
Recognizing that a system of free and open elections is an integral part of our system of government, CCAO and the Ohio Association of Election Officials [OAE] work together on elections issues through a joint committee on the administration of elections. During the last state budget bill we sought to build a partnership with the state to fund the acquisition of electronic poll books. Through the efforts of the State Legislature, Administration, Secretary of State, and our committee, we forged a partnership in which the state appropriated \$12 million to reimburse the counties for 85% of their costs to purchase the electronic poll books. The program also allowed flexibility to those counties that had already stepped up and previously purchased the poll books. This program has been extremely successful and widely appreciated, and we are very grateful for the positive partnership that was established.

After that was accomplished, we turned our attention to the replacement of aging election equipment and the 2020 Presidential election. After many meetings and hours of work and discussion with the Legislature, Administration, and particularly OBM and DAS, we developed a plan that would identify cost before seeking funding. DAS interviewed vendors and secured state term pricing for the elections equipment that is currently available. The Secretary of State then issued a directive instructing the Boards of Elections to work with their Commissioners to develop a statement of need identifying what voting system and equipment the county would like to acquire. This statement of need is to be returned to the Secretary's office by June 13. The counties' information will then be aggregated by the Secretary and presented to the Administration and General Assembly to provide what we believe will be a good faith estimate of the total cost for replacing Ohio's voting equipment.



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We fully realize that this is a multi-year effort to get all counties up-graded. Our preference is to start to seed the program in this year's operating budget coupled with a description of what the state/county purchasing partnership may look like in the future. We understand the Administration is interested in capital dollars, perhaps in next year's capital budget bill. We appreciate a partnership -maybe a blend of dollars - as capital dollars can help with purchasing going forward and operating dollars could help with reimbursement for counties who have already purchased equipment, just like the electronic poll book program, as well as for counties looking to lease equipment.

The House included a \$1 M capital appropriation to be used to reimburse counties that have entered into agreements for new voting equipment on or after January 1, 2014, for up to 50 percent of their acquisition costs. It also provides that no reimbursement to a county is to exceed \$250,000, which the sponsor intended to apply to that initial \$1 million included in the bill. The bill also requires DAS to issue an RFP, selecting no more than three vendors, for purposes of creating a unified statewide purchasing program or leasing plan for voting equipment. Finally, the House provision includes a statement of intent that the General Assembly intends to provide additional funding to counties for voting equipment by SFY 19 in a similar manner as outlined above. CCAO and OAEO appreciate the addition by the House of funds to reimburse counties who have had to purchase voting equipment.

We respectfully ask that the Senate further refine the House provision to:

- Increase the appropriation to \$7 M, which would fully reimburse forward thinking counties who have already replaced their voting equipment.
- Provide a partnership ratio between the state and counties which is closer to that of electronic poll books, which was an 85/15 split.
- More clearly pronounce the intent of the General Assembly to complete replacement of all elections equipment prior to the 2020 presidential election and commit funding for this replacement over a several year period that most effectively accomplishes this goal.

Please recognize that we all understand that state dollars are extremely tight, but that we are looking to define this state/county partnership and seed it in this current budget that you are now considering in order to secure its successful implementation in the future. Again, thank you for allowing me to speak today. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.