

Budget Testimony
Tim Ward
Ohio Association of Election Officials
May 23, 2017



Chairman Jordan and members of the Senate General Government Subcommittee:

My name is Tim Ward and I am President of the Ohio Association of Election Officials (OAE). I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to present testimony on HB 49, the state biennial budget. I would also like to thank the County Commissioners Association of Ohio for their testimony. CCAO has been an invaluable partner to my association as we have looked for creative ways to tighten our belts and more efficiently utilize taxpayer resources.

It is in a somewhat awkward fashion that I humbly approach this committee with hat in hand to ask for your assistance in solving a problem of imminent concern to OAE, the replacement of our aging voting equipment.

The need for new elections equipment is real. Every election more and more equipment fails, while the cost of maintaining our antiquated voting machines rises. While many of us long for the inexpensive days of punch card voting, the federal government has left us with new mandates that require us to use more costly equipment. In doing so they have left the funding of that equipment back on local

governments. It is an unfortunate situation, but one that our democracy cannot afford to ignore.

OAE0 is grateful to the House of Representatives for including \$1 million in seed money to reimburse counties that have already purchased voting equipment. It is a clear and definitive step in the right direction. However, we would ask that the Senate clean up some of the language in the House version of the bill and build upon the foundation they have put forward.

First, while \$1 million in new money is certainly appreciated in this very tight budget, we believe that to adequately reimburse the dozen or so counties that have already purchased equipment, an appropriation of \$7 million is closer to the mark. Second, the House version set the reimbursement rate at up to 50% state money with the rest coming from the counties. We, along with CCAO, have consistently asked for a match closer to 85% state and 15% local as was the case with e-poll books. However, an easier way to set up a program could be to simply appropriate money and reimburse counties on a per registered voter basis. This is the way we allocated federal Help America Vote Act money that we received in 2005.

Third, the House version limits DAS to contract with three voting equipment vendors. In reality, DAS has already completed their procurement process and five vendors have qualified to sell equipment in Ohio. We see no need for the legislature to arbitrarily limit competition. Finally, we would encourage the Senate to include "legislative intent" language to assure counties that the General Assembly intends to participate in a full-fledged cost sharing program, perhaps with capital dollars as opposed to GRF dollars. The House did include language to this effect and OAE0 appreciates that.

One final note. OAEO is extraordinarily grateful that the legislature has appropriated money to assist counties in purchasing electronic poll books. This state-local partnership has yielded extraordinary results for Ohio's voters who have seen a much smoother and efficient voting experience. Election officials have reaped the results of this enhanced technology as well. We hope this program will serve as a model for replacing our voting systems. Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.