

Proponent Testimony  
Tim Ward, OAE0  
Senate Bill 135

Chairman Oelslager, Ranking Member Skindell and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Tim Ward. I am Director of the Madison County Board of Elections and currently serve as Co-Chair of the Ohio Association of Election Officials (OAE0) legislative committee. I am also the immediate past president of the association and have served for several years on a joint task force with members of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio.

I am here along with Franklin County Director Ed Leonard to offer OAE0's support for Senate Bill 135. Our backgrounds could hardly be more different. Ed is a former elected official from the Democratic Party. I am a former elected official from the Republican Party. Ed is from a large urban county, and I am from a small rural county. Ed's county currently uses electronic voting machines, while my county employs a paper-based system. However, we could not be more unified in our belief that passage of SB 135 is critical for the future of our great state.

The need for SB 135 has been well documented. I'm sure you have all heard from your county boards of elections and your local county commissioners about the rapid failure rate of our voting equipment and the lack of local resources to replace it. I can assure you we are not crying wolf. With the notable exception of electronic poll books, where the legislature made a critical and strategic investment in elections, our operations have historically been funded at the county level. So please know that we approach you in a most humble and gracious

manner. Every board of elections around the state is grateful for your receptiveness to our earnest plea for assistance.

With this appropriation in hand, our boards of elections can secure new voting equipment which is essential to our ability to conduct fair, honest and accurate elections. While we would have hoped that the federal government would have stepped forward and provided some level of assistance, it is now clear that such action will not be forthcoming. We are glad that the state legislature has recognized that every level of government has a responsibility to provide for the critical infrastructure of our democracy, just the same as they do for the critical infrastructure of our roads and bridges. Please know that this investment is needed and necessary, and as I mentioned before, it is much appreciated by your local boards of elections.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee might have.