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Budget Testimony
Gary J. Lee
County Commissioners Association of Ohio
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Chairman Oelslager and distinguished members of the Senate finance committee: I am Gary Lee a Union County Commissioner since 2003. I have served as president of CCAO in 2013 and am a 15-year veteran of the Union County Board of Elections prior to my election as Commissioner. During my year as president of CCAO, I worked with the Ohio Association of Election Officials [OAE] to establish a joint committee on the administration of elections. We were pleased to have Secretary of State Jon Husted join us to begin conversations on election issues.

After several productive meetings we have agreed that the replacement of our aging election equipment was our number one priority! Our first mission was to find a way to fund the electronic poll books. Through the efforts of then Sen. Faber, the State Legislature, Secretary of State Jon Husted, and our committee, forged a partnership {85% state 15% county} to purchase the electronic poll books at a cost of \$12 million. It also allowed flexibility to those counties that had already stepped up and previously purchased the poll books. We are most grateful to Chairman Faber for his leadership in that funding effort!

After that was accomplished, all of us turned our attention to the replacement of aging election equipment and the 2020 Presidential election. After many meeting and hours of work and discussion with the legislature, administration, and particular OBM and DAS, we jointly developed a plan. First DAS worked on getting vendors to develop state term pricing on needed election equipment, so that we would all have a good idea of what the cost would be. Secretary of State, Jon Husted issued a directive instructing the Boards of Elections to work with their Commissioners to develop a statement of intent as to what the county would like to purchase. Those figures were returned to the SOS three weeks after the directive was issued. This effort gave all of us a handle on the state-wide cost.

I would like to thank Senator LaRose for his leadership on this most important issue of replacing Ohio's aging election equipment. There is nothing more fundamental than fair and accurate elections that protect our democracy. County government is an extension of State government that is required to deliver a variety of services including the administration of elections.

We hope that the Finance Committee appreciates the fact that we all understand that state dollars are extremely tight, but, we must complete this joint effort immediately. The bill that is before you today is a big step for the State to fulfill its obligation as an election partner with Ohio's counties. County Commissioners believe that the State should provide some additional funds to counties because there will be significant costs associated with the implementation and training staff and poll workers.

Once again thanks to Senator LaRose and the Senate Finance committee for your leadership and concerns about our aging election equipment.

I would be glad to answer any questions that you may have. Thank you all for the time you have given me to address this important issue.

Gary J. Lee
Union County Commissioner