



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPRESENTATIVES STEVE HAMBLEY AND MICHAEL SKINDELL

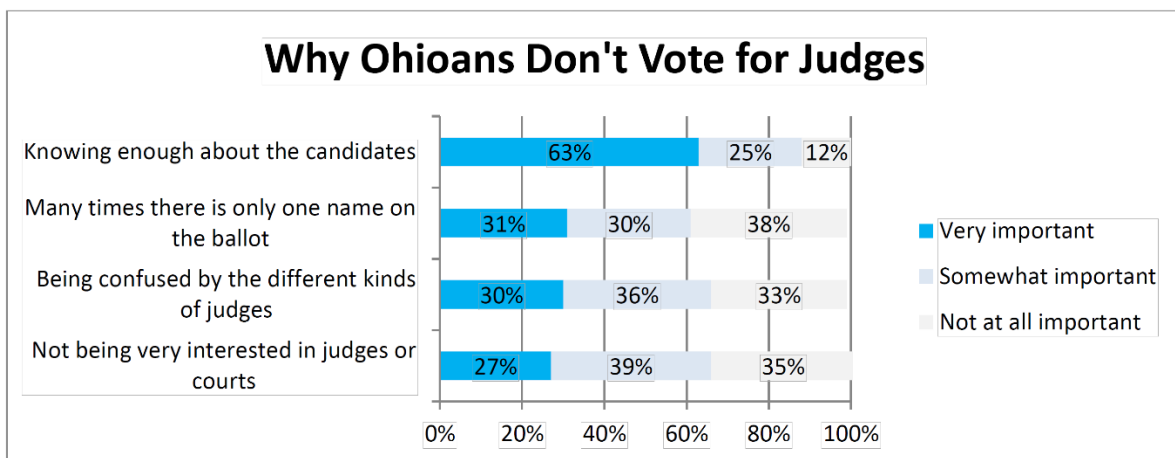
*Representative Steve Hambley*

Over the years, political scientists have generally determined that party label is probably one of the most important factors in voters' decisions in judicial races. In 2014, the Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics completed an *Ohio Judicial Elections Survey* which provides some important insight into the issue of party identification in judicial elections.

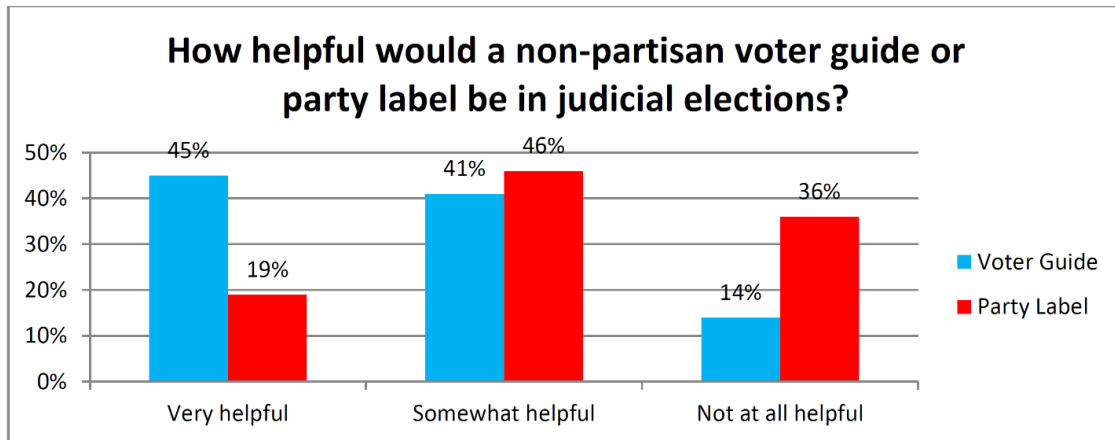
The study observed that, “One-half of the respondents say they vote less frequently for judges compared to other offices (“drop off” in the vote for judges). A major cause of this pattern is a lack of information about judicial candidates and the court system in general.”

They concluded:

- Three-fifths of registered voters say that the most common reason they don't vote for judges is a lack of knowledge about the candidate.
- Three-fifths of registered voters say that they frequently lack information to make good decisions in judicial elections.



Regarding partisan information, the study also concluded that a party label would be very or somewhat helpful to a large majority of voters - 65 percent (see below).



While the survey results demonstrate that proportionately more voters deem a non-partisan voter guide helpful compared to those indicating the helpfulness of knowing party affiliation, it does not suggest that it has to be an “either-or” proposition. In other words, both sources of information can better inform the voting public in making a decision about a judicial contest. With this proposal, the voters can have both. Including the partisan information on the ballot, as chosen by the candidate and affirmed by the party nominating process, all voters are assured that relevant information is provided at the point of casting the ballot.

I am certain that we all agree, judges should not make decisions based on partisan considerations. Under current law, Ohio Judges and candidates for judicial office are obligated to comply with relevant portions of the Ohio Campaign Finance laws, as well as the Code of Judicial Conduct that provides guidance for the ethical conduct of judges. The code contains specific prohibitions against partisan and financial activities inappropriate to judicial office. This proposed law does not change any of those requirements of behavior or prohibitions. It simply informs the voter of factual and relevant information about the judicial candidate.

We need to quit living in a state of denial and recognize that partisan affiliation of a candidate is an important consideration to most voters. Providing voters with

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relevant and accurate facts on the ballot will confirm that they are more inclined to vote for these important offices once they get the information that they require to decide.

In summary, this legislation simply argues that permitting the judicial candidate to communicate their party affiliation to every voter at the ballot box has merit. Thank you for hearing our sponsor testimony today and we look forward to answering any questions you may have.