

HB 166
Interested Party Testimony
Ohio Association of Election Officials

Chairman Dolan, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Aaron Ockerman and I am Executive Director of the Ohio Association of Election Officials (OAEO). I am grateful for the opportunity to present written testimony on HB 166, the state operating budget.

I am requesting reinstatement of House language that was removed in the Senate's substitute version of the bill. Specifically, the language amended section 3501.12 and dealt with pay adjustments for certain board of elections members. I will talk briefly about the background of this statute and then discuss the reason the House chose to amend it.

Boards of Elections are the only appointed county authority whose salary is set by state statute. As such, any adjustments to county board member pay must be made by the state legislature.

During the latter part of the 132nd General Assembly, amendments were made to SB 296 that set slight pay adjustments for certain local officials including townships trustees, county elected officials, and members of boards of elections. In the case of township trustees and local elected officials, pay adjustments were granted across the board to all officials. However, for boards of elections, adjustments were only granted to the 44 largest counties.

While I hesitate to divine legislative intent, our association has been in close contact with members of the legislature who were deeply involved in the pay adjustment legislation and understand that the goal

was to also grant across the board pay adjustments to boards of elections, not just the 44 largest boards. We believe that the discrepancy occurred due to the complex structure of our pay statutes and the fact that the bill only referenced one section, not all sections of that statute. In doing so, SB 296 omitted, we believe inadvertently, a reference to the smallest boards of elections.

The change the House made to 3501.12 corrects this omission and only grants the EXACT SAME pay adjustment to the 44 county boards of elections who were excluded by SB 296. It is not an additional adjustment beyond what the large boards of elections are already receiving or what other local elected officials received. It is important to note that this change only concerns county government and budgets and is supported by the County Commissioners Association of Ohio.

I hope this succinctly explains the need for the change. OAEO would sincerely appreciate your support for this amendment and its inclusion into HB 166.