

Runbeck Election Services
Proponent Testimony on HB 487
House Government Oversight Committee
Tuesday, Feb. 8, 2022

Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Brown and members of the House Government Oversight Committee; thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jim Suver and I am Vice President of Business Development for Runbeck Election Services. I am pleased to submit this testimony in support of HB 487 to make much needed updates to Ohio law in ballot printing and procurement.

Since 1972 Runbeck Election Services has been a valued, full-service election solution company providing ballot printing, absent voter packet preparation as well as other critical election functions across the U.S. We operate out of a purpose-built, 90,000-square foot, state-of-the-art print, and fulfillment facility in Phoenix, Arizona. We extensively test and operate high-tech printing equipment to ensure all ballots and election materials are produced accurately and economically. During the last presidential election cycle, we produced 80 million ballots with our government election partners.

HB 487 makes a number of needed updates and improvements to Ohio law in the area of ballot printing and procurement. Much has changed since the current law (ORC Sec. 3505.13) was written some 20+ years ago when elections were less complex. County boards of election and the vendors they rely upon to conduct state and local elections must comply with numerous new rules, state laws, state directives and federal laws. Examples of such changes are the federal enactment of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) in 2002, the Move Act in 2009 and modifications Ohio has made to absentee and early voting policies. In addition to these changes in state and federal law, county boards of elections must address the threats from cybercrime and actively work to meet new and ever changing cybersecurity guidelines.

Election ballot printing and mail fulfillment is no longer a commodity. It is now a value added, highly specialized service with great complexity. If enacted, the procurement language in HB 487 will require value added "proposals" from qualified print vendors rather than printers that can submit a "bid" and win the business primarily because they are the cheapest. This updated language is based on a Request for Proposal (RFP) process where qualified "proposers" respond to opportunities and are "awarded" on value added criteria for ballot printing and production work. This allows county boards of election the opportunity to award work considering other factors - beyond favoring only price. An election Board has full control to award a vendor offering the lowest price, yet the legislation before you allows the process for other criteria to be considered.

Other important elements of HB 487 include:

Updating how print vendors are notified of opportunities by augmenting the current process allowing county boards to use electronic communication to notify qualified vendors. This notice could be circulated by email, posted online to procurement websites, or listed in other election publications.

Maintaining performance bond requirements but reducing the thresholds from 200% to 100% of the contract. Printers cannot currently obtain 200% performance bonds to comply with current law and be competitive. This bill allows qualified ballot print vendors who obtain a multi-year contract to provide a 100% performance bond equal to the largest election during the contract period.

The bill also repeals the in-state requirement for printing of ballots. This in-state mandate was adopted at a time when printers could produce a standardized ballot for county boards of election. Over time, federal law, state law, and new voting technology have combined to make ballots more complex and technical.

Also, new directives issued by the Secretary of State have required counties and companies to improve their security posture in this marketplace. As a result, there are now a limited number of companies in Ohio that can print and produce ballots. Not only is this anti-competitive, by creating a near monopoly for Ohio-based ballot print companies, it also may create real supply and demand risks. This supply issue is highlighted as the state has less options to fulfil their ballot print needs during one of the worst paper supply chain events in decades. The strict geographical lines that are currently in place unfortunately limit the number of qualified companies available to the counties. HB 487 will go a long way toward correcting this and improving those options.

Thank you for your time and consideration.