

Testimony on House Joint Resolution 6
House Government Oversight Committee
December 7, 2022
Submitted by: Tony D'Ambrosio

Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the Government Oversight Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Tony D'Ambrosio. I'm an active voter from current Ohio House District 28 and Ohio Senate District 8.

I strongly oppose HJR 6. There is no reason to make it harder for Ohioans to pass citizen-led ballot initiatives. House Joint Resolution 6 (HJR6) is a constitutional amendment that will raise the threshold to pass citizen-led Constitutional Amendments on the ballot from a simple majority (50% plus one), to a super majority (60%). This further reduces the power of Ohio citizens to address important issues that otherwise go ignored.

Ohioans from across the political spectrum have utilized the right to amend our Constitution via the petition process for over one hundred years. We are fortunate to live in a state that gives voters the right to direct democracy and the ability to have a real say in politics when contrived super majorities in the Ohio General Assembly ignore the will of the people. Ohioans have the power of direct democracy in three ways: through citizen-led constitutional amendments, initiated statutes, and referendums. The amendment asks voters to approve, by a simple majority, a rule to require a supermajority of all future ballot initiatives.

With historic supermajorities in both chambers and unconstitutionally gerrymandered districts, there should be all kinds of questions around proposals to make access to direct democracy more difficult. This seems an obvious power grab during a lame duck session when Ohioans are least likely to be paying attention. It is further suspect after a year with two primaries as a result of the legislature's and Ohio Redistricting Committee's unwillingness to heed the decisions of the Ohio Supreme Court in drawing legal, fair, constitutional maps. Why the need to do this now? It has been mentioned by proponents that this is a resolution that seeks to address issues for generations to come. It seems a short-sighted knee jerk reaction to what is recognized as a potential threat to already ill-gotten power in state government by a party that wants to consolidate power by any and all means.

With murmurings of citizen led initiatives to address issues such as gerrymandering and redistricting, those who hold power now wish to further silence the voices of Ohio citizens by limiting our power in self-governance. Ohioans only use the citizen initiative if the state legislature is not accountable to the voters. We have recently witnessed that lack of

accountability and we can't afford to have our voices further silenced by HJR 6. I oppose this resolution and respectfully ask you to do the same.