

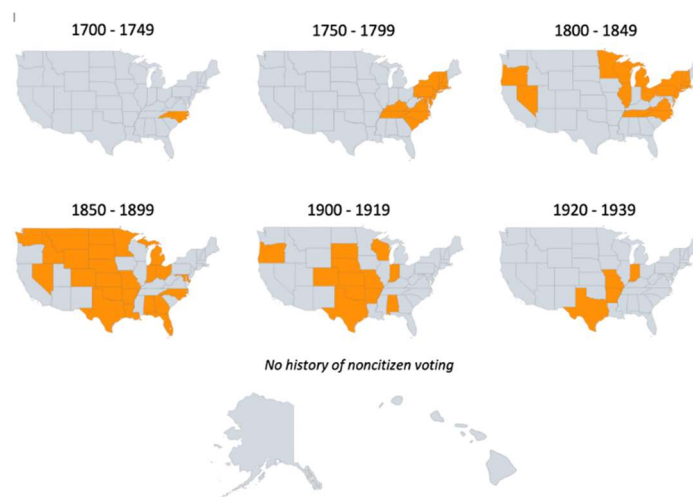


May 24, 2022

Dear Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly and Members of the State & Local Government Committee,

For some municipalities, incorporating the perspectives of non-US citizen residents by allowing them to vote for their local representatives and on local issues adds value to the municipality as a whole. These active and engaged community members pay taxes, own businesses, have children who attend our schools; they are part of the fabric of communities. Ohio is a Home Rule state, and this is a proper issue for local control as it does not affect other jurisdictions; these residents cannot vote in state and federal elections. Notably, Greene County Board of Elections has confirmed the ability to manage differing ballots.

In 2020, the citizens of the Village of Yellow Springs voted to change our Village Charter to allow non-US citizen residents to vote. This action is similar to that of 15 municipalities in 4 other Home Rule states. Such participation is not new in the US. It was not until 1996 that Congress prohibited non-US citizens from voting in federal elections; however, 18 USC 611 states "aliens are authorized to vote for such other purpose under a State constitution or statute or a local ordinance." From the founding of our country until 1926, 40 states at various points allowed non-citizens to vote in local, state and federal elections.



The Village of Yellow Springs views allowing non-US citizen residents to vote as creating a more representative and responsive government. In fact, allowing these residents to vote on local issues enhances democracy by effectively providing a voice to those with a vested interest in their communities. This fosters engagement and connection, both of which are vital to the success of local government. Local jurisdictions are in the best position to represent constituents' interests.

There is no negative impact from allowing contributing community members to vote on local issues, thus no need to amend Ohio's Constitution. Without a problem to solve, it is incumbent upon our state legislators to preserve the principles of Home Rule, understanding that the Buckeye State is a diversity of municipalities with varying values and cultures. Home Rule was adopted to promote greater civic engagement at the local level, a significant outcome of allowing non-US citizen residents to vote on local issues. I believe we can all agree that differing personal and political perspectives should be respected.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Thomas K. Hensch".