



Chairman Dolan, Vice-Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today.

The tenth amendment of the United States Constitution states that “all powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States”. That’s why states are so often called the laboratories of democracy. Plainly stated, the states know how to get things done.

Here in Ohio, one of our most watched experiments within our laboratory has been our elections. “As goes Ohio, so goes the nation...” isn’t just some made-up meaningless phrase – it comes from Ohio’s long history of being the focal point of presidential elections. In fact, up until this last election, the last time Ohio voted otherwise was 1960. That’s sixty years of being under the microscope. What’s that gotten us? The best-run elections in the nation. After all, when you’re under that microscope, you need to hone your craft, innovate, and develop a system that works for the voters.

Under the most challenging environment to host an election in our state’s history, our system shined in 2020. While other states struggled, we set an example. And most importantly, Ohio voters had confidence in the result of our election.

And what was the result of that election?

- Nearly six million Ohioans voted.
- There was a 74 percent turnout rate.
- 59 percent of ballots were cast early.
- 94 percent of absentee ballots were returned.
- Only 0.42 percent of absentee ballots were rejected as invalid.
- All-time lows in provisional ballots.

Every single one of those statistics is a state record.

Higher turnout than ever. More accessibility than ever. And stronger security than ever.

This doesn’t happen by accident. This happens when a strong election system, complete with processes and procedures that protect the integrity and security of the vote, works in partnership with dedicated bipartisan election officials to provide our citizens with unprecedented access and opportunity to make their voice heard.

As you know, not only do I serve as Ohio's chief elections officer, but also as the front door for business in Ohio. Whenever an entrepreneur has an idea, a plan, some hope and the willingness to work really hard -- they come to us first. While the pandemic has certainly impacted our economy, it's only sharpened the resilience of Ohioans. That's demonstrated in what can only be described as astronomical numbers of new businesses filing with our office in 2020. In fact, by October we had already surpassed 2019's record-breaking year -- ending up with a total of 171,073 new businesses created in 2020. That's 31 percent more than the number of businesses created in 2019.

I've worked hard with my team to do more than just open the door for these new businesses. We welcomed them in and for the first time are matching them up with the incredible state and federal resources available to better support their dream and give them opportunity to be successful.

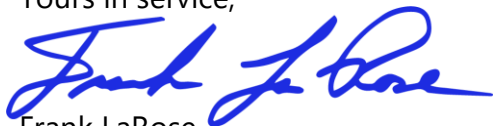
I'm proud of our team in the Ohio Secretary of State's office. We've worked hard to earn the confidence of Ohioans, and I feel we've been successful. To accomplish our mission, we've made a habit of taking great care of the taxpayer dollars entrusted to us.

In fiscal year 2020, when the Governor's Office and OBM required executive agencies to reduce GRF appropriations, our office voluntarily reduced our remaining General Revenue Fund appropriations by 20%. In fiscal year 2021, when OBM asked executive agencies to reduce their GRF appropriations by 20%, which would have equaled about \$200,000 for our office, our office made additional voluntary GRF reductions by moving \$1 million in appropriations from the GRF to our office's main operating fund. Our request in this budget maintains those GRF reductions. For fiscal years 2022 and 2023 we are requesting a 50% reduction from our full non-reduced fiscal year 2021 GRF appropriations.

The past year we've seen Ohioans doing more with less. We all have a responsibility to do the same, and I'm proud of the conservative, fiscally responsible budget my team is recommending here today.

Thank you, Chairman Dolan and members of the committee, for having me in today to testify. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Yours in service,



Frank LaRose

Ohio Secretary of State