

Runbeck Election Services
Proponent Testimony on HB 487
Senate Local Government and Elections Committee
Wednesday, May 18, 2022

Chair Gavarone, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Maharath and members of the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee; thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this afternoon. My name is Jim Suver and I serve as Vice President of Business Development for Runbeck Election Services. I am pleased to submit this testimony in support of HB 487 to make long overdue updates to Ohio law regarding ballot printing and procurement.

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

HB 487 makes a number of important updates and improvements to Ohio law in the area of ballot printing and procurement. The election landscape has seen many changes since the current law (ORC Sec. 3505.13) was written over 20 years ago when elections were much less complex. Today, county Boards of Elections and the vendors they rely on to conduct state and local elections must comply with numerous new rules, state laws, state directives and federal laws. Some examples of these changes are 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 also now be prepared to address cyber threats and actively work to meet new and ever-changing cybersecurity guidelines.

Election ballot printing and mail fulfillment is no longer a commodity, but 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 offer the lowest price. The updated language in the bill 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 Elections the ability to award vendors considering other factors - beyond just favoring price. An election board will still have full control to award a vendor offering the lowest price, yet the legislation before you allows 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 threshold from 200% to 100% of the contract amount. Printers currently cannot obtain 200% performance bonds to comply with the law and be competitive. This measure allows qualified ballot print vendors who obtain a multi-year contract to provide a 100% performance bond equal to the largest election conducted during the contract period.

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

Also, new directives issued by the Secretary of State require counties and companies to improve their security posture in this marketplace. As a result, there are now a limited number of companies operating in Ohio that can produce and print ballots. This anti-competitive policy creates a near monopoly for Ohio-based print companies and may create very real supply and demand risks. I highlight this supply issue because county Boards of Elections have fewer options to fulfill their ballot print needs during one of the worst paper supply events in decades. You have all heard or read about the supply chain issues associated with the pandemic from computer chips to building materials. Unfortunately, paper supply has not been spared either. For further background on the paper supply challenges I am including a recent report that you can review at a later time.

Confining vendors to inside the state serves only to limit the number of qualified vendors and companies available to counties. HB 487 will go a long way toward correcting and improving the law - bringing competition, improved services and more options to the ballot print production space of Ohio.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions from the committee.