

Sub. H. B. No. 458  
Testimony of Michael W. Ahern  
12/12/2022

Good morning members of the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee. My name is Michael Ahern. I live in Blacklick Ohio.

Psalm 68

Sing to God, sing in praise of his name, extol him who rides on the clouds; rejoice before him—his name is the Lord. A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.

According to religious scholars, in a literal sense, God shows mercy to the less fortunate, takes care of them, and protects them; and this is a character which the great God often assumes, partly to express his power and providence over such, and partly to signify his tenderness, mercy, and goodness to them; and in which he should be imitated by civil magistrates, and by all good men. It was not only a law in Israel to show regard to such, and take care not to afflict them, but it is also a branch of pure undefiled Christian religion, ( James 1:27 )

Sub. H. B. No. 458 directly conflicts with Psalm 68. If enacted, it will disenfranchise the weak among us by requiring our civil magistrates to implement onerous requirements on our most fundamental right, the right to vote.

The members of this Committee are able-bodied, mobile, and generally successful individuals in the prime of your lives. How much more important it is that you craft legislation that lifts those who, today, are less fortunate and more challenged than you rather than erecting barriers to the limited self-determination they have available to them.. Hebrews 6:10-12 shows that “For God is not unjust. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other believers,

as you still do.” Be clear that the proposed legislation harms all voters who do not have the ability to obtain photo ID in order to be able to vote - even if they could have easily met such a high standard in the past.

How does this legislation do this?

The proposed legislation requires up to date photo ID and removes other long-standing methods of voter identification as a lawful basis when electors choose to vote. Notwithstanding that this onerous requirement has no basis in fact in furtherance of solving any existing problem, it is in direct conflict with Psalm 68, haughtily dismisses God’s loving guidance extolled in Hebrews 6, and in doing so, harms tens of thousands of Ohioans regardless of age, physical ability, life circumstances, or Party affiliation.

Here are just two examples of how this legislation harms Ohio voters:

Age - Most recent numbers indicate that there are over 63,000 Ohioans in licensed residential care and assisted living facilities and over 180,000 older Ohioans with a severe disability. The Altamonte Group Home in Athens is just 8 miles from the BMV in Athens. Even at short distances, the ability for these Ohioans to travel and obtain a state ID or driver's license is almost insurmountable. How will they vote under the new onerous ID requirement? They won't.

Public transit -

According to the Ohio Department of Transportation, Ohio transit systems provide 117 million rides per year. According to a 2017 report, rural public transit in Ohio is inadequately funded: counties that have public transit failed to meet market demand by a million rides a year in 2015; by 2025, that will rise to 4 million rides a year due to demographic changes. On top of that, 27 counties have no public transit service at all. Where public transit is available, according to a study of public transit riders and providers, there are major scheduling challenges which result in long wait times for rides. Riders did not believe they could make spontaneous or flexible travel decisions, limiting or preventing their participation in a variety of activities

and inhibiting integration in their community. Transportation providers indicated they struggled to balance meeting the needs of their clients with budget constraints and regulatory and documentation requirements. How will rural Ohioans without private transportation be able to travel to the BMV to get a state-issued ID? How will citizens who rely on public transportation make “the last mile” to obtain or update their photo ID? They won’t.

These are just two examples of significant numbers of Ohioans who will be harmed by the proposed legislation - “the forgotten” by you, who are currently in good circumstance, who are not deterred by the barriers you are setting before those who are not as fortunate as you. Shame.

Finally, this is a solution in search of a problem. According to reports, 31 incidents relate to ballots that may have been cast illegally: 14 on behalf of a dead person, 8 by non-citizens and 9 instances of double voting occurred during the 2020 election. Twenty-seven of the ballots in question account for 0.0005% of the 5.9 million votes that year.

I will leave you with the words of Secretary of State La Rose:  
"Our state is proof positive you don’t have to choose between secure or convenient elections – we have both, In Ohio, easy to vote and hard to cheat aren’t mutually exclusive.”

Vote no on Sub. H. B. No. 458.