

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify. I am unable to testify in person so I ask that you accept my written testimony below.

First, I want to tell you that I am a registered Republican.

Second, I want to tell you that I am absolutely disgusted with the Ohio GOP “cancel democracy” initiative.

I am opposed to HJR1. No, that is not really a fair description. I am VEHEMENTLY OPPOSED to this bill and related actions which undermine our democracy.

HJR1 and related bills are an attempt to establish an anti-democratic authoritarian minority rule government in Ohio in order to ignore the will of the people. This is a Putin still rule which has no place in our democratic government.

Just to remind you, here are some definitions of a democracy from various sources:

- DEMOCRACY: a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives.
- DEMOCRACY: control of an organization or group by the **MAJORITY** of its members
- The meaning of DEMOCRACY is *government by the people*; especially : **rule of the majority**.
- *DEMOCRACY*, literally, rule by the people
- *A DEMOCRACY is a society in which the citizens are sovereign and control the government.*

I could find many more similar definitions via a simple internet search. I believe in democracy not autocracy. Democracy means every vote counts, everyone who wants to vote can, everyone accepts the results of the majority, candidates are elected based upon their abilities and factual information.

I abhor all forms of election manipulation such as any means of voter suppression to make it more difficult to vote or distort election information.

This bill is just one in a series of actions being promoted by the Ohio GOP to “cancel democracy”.

First the GOP only has a supermajority because you have violated the overwhelmingly voter approved Constitutional amendment to prevent gerrymandering.

Senator Huffman, Secretary of State LaRose, and Auditor Faber were legislators who helped author the anti-gerrymandering Constitutional amendment. Did they intentionally construct ambiguous language they could exploit later to continue gerrymandering?

The ORC and legislature ignored the bipartisan decisions of the Ohio Supreme Court declaring the maps illegal and directing new maps to be drawn that conform to the Ohio Constitution. The Supreme Court should have held all of you in contempt but didn't. Instead you delayed until the illegal maps had to be used anyway. Governor DeWine's son Pat should have recused himself from the decisions but didn't. So much for the “rule of law” - a concept that was once a major principle of the GOP.

After the November 2022 election, Secretary of State LaRose declared Ohio's elections secure and valid. Despite a secure and valid election, new voter restrictions were enacted. These

new restrictions simply amounted to voter suppression - making it harder to vote- reducing valid forms of ID, reducing access to early voting, reducing access to drop boxes.

There is a fundamental problem when the illegally gerrymandered GOP supermajority in the Ohio Legislature does not support and enact the legislation polls show is favored by Ohio voters. In fact, the illegal gerrymandered GOP supermajority is enacting laws exactly opposite of what the majority of Ohioans want.

Voters have only one option to counter an unrepresentative legislature - initiative petitions. This bill seeks to take that option away.

Secretary of State LaRose says this bill is needed to prevent “special interest” groups from manipulating our Constitution. LaRose seems to have a history of lying - 2022 election was safe and secure but more restrictions are needed, had concerns about the redistricting maps but approved them anyway. He is lying again.

Senator Huffman and the bills sponsors are at least more honest that this is an attempt to prevent passage of an abortion rights amendment - a position which is widely favored by Ohioans according to many polls. Why is the GOP so afraid to accept majority rule?

And then now the hypocrisy of wanting to push this through a special August election with very low turnout. A very important piece of legislation to try and sneak through a low turnout election.

It is very apparent that the only “special interest” trying to manipulate the Ohio Constitution is the illegal gerrymandered GOP supermajority.

As a Republican, I don't want to see Republican positions shoved down voters throats. If our positions are valid then we should be able to convince people our ideas are better. If we can't do that, then maybe we need to reconsider them.

Forcing idealism on voters is overreach which will eventually result in a revolt with the GOP being out of power for a very long time.

Listen to the majority of voters. Represent them. And do it fairly - not via “cancel democracy” manipulation.

Vote down HJR1 and the special August election to pass it.

Sincerely

John Gray