

Citizen Testimony on HJR 1: Require 60% vote to approve any constitutional amendment

by Debra K Shankland

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I'm a proud American, and for most of my adult life, I've also been a proud Ohioan. I firmly believe in democracy, and that voting is a privilege and a duty. I have voted in every election since I was old enough to do so. Allowing citizens to have input on the laws they are governed by, and allowing citizens to vote on and win popular legislation by majority, is a noble tradition in America and in Ohio since 1912. Unfortunately, my home state is growing less democratic every year, making each of my votes count less and less. The latest tactic to dilute my vote is the very unnecessary House Joint Resolution 1.

Legislators at the Ohio Statehouse know it is often difficult to get a consensus from their peers to put forth legislation. Can you imagine trying to get hundreds of thousands of people to agree on and put forth legislation? How large is your district? Now can you imagine traveling to 44 counties to garner support for legislation? How about all 88 counties? Amending our state constitution by citizen initiative is extremely difficult, and so only those measures of utmost importance to everyday Ohioans can pass by a majority. The 60% supermajority required by HJR 1 will make it nearly impossible. Why on earth would our legislators want to do that?

HJR 1 seems to be yet another gift to moneyed interests. Only millionaires and billionaires will have the financial means to hire paid canvassers to procure the hundreds of thousands of signatures for, and advertise for passage of, their pet amendments to our Ohio Constitution. Is this really what our representatives want?

This seems like a terrible thing to say, but I can only conclude that those whose jobs it is to represent Ohioans don't like the idea of a current Ohioan-led initiative, so the rules are being re-written to stop it before it can even go before a vote of the people. That is unfair, undemocratic, and personally insulting to the voters of Ohio.

Stop HJR 1.

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