

April 17, 2023

**Written Testimony in Opposition to proposed House Joint Resolution No. 1.**

H.J.R. No. 1 is yet another attempt by the Ohio Legislature to limit the power of the people to actively and meaningfully participate in decision making that directly impacts their lives. A pattern seems to be developing for legislators to suggest a remedy for a problem that does not exist to advance their own agenda.

Article II sec. 01 of the Ohio Constitution specifically reserves the power of THE PEOPLE to propose to the general assembly laws and amendments to the constitution, and to adopt or reject them at the polls on a referendum ... and independent of the General Assembly to propose amendments to the constitution and to adopt or reject the same at the polls.... Existing requirements for a citizen-initiated amendment to be placed on the ballot and passed have already proven effective in allowing citizens to raise and vote upon issues important to them when the Legislature has not been willing to act without producing an inordinate number of constitutional amendments. The claim that influence of unspecified “outside special interest” has led, or will lead, to an increase in voter-initiated amendments is unsubstantiated. Citizens themselves must lead these initiatives and voters will either approve or reject them. The fact is that the vast majority of constitutional amendments that have been passed were initiated by the Legislature. The Ohio Constitution is intended to protect the rights of its citizens and the elected officials are sworn to protect those rights, not limit or usurp those rights for themselves.

Raising the 60% required vote to pass a citizen-initiated Amendment is a direct attempt to unreasonably restrict the ability of Citizens to directly participate in the process of democracy. While also raising the required vote to pass a legislative-initiated amendment to 60% appears to establish equity, the reality is as a result of continued gerrymandering, the current Republican Super majority, can still continue to pass legislation to protect its power without being accountable to anyone other than its party core, while at the same time slowly eroding democracy by limiting meaningful participation by all citizens in their government. It is the fear that at some point a more perceptive and involved electorate could under the existing constitution decide that they no longer wish to be governed in this manner and that they will hold their representatives accountable that appears to be the underlying motivation for introduction of H.J.R No. 1.

Respectfully Submitted,  
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