

TESTIMONY OPPOSING HJR 1

House Constitutional Resolutions Committee

Opposition testimony of Tony D'Ambrosio, Private Citizen

Chair Plummer, Vice Chair Hillyer, Ranking Member Mohamed and Members of the House Constitutional Resolutions Committee thank you for affording me the opportunity to testify against HJR 1

HJR1 would require any future constitutional amendment to be approved by at least 60% of the voters, eliminate the ten-day cure period to gather additional signatures for an initiative petition proposing a constitutional amendment, require an initiative petition proposing an amendment to the Constitution to have petitions bearing the signatures of at least 5% of the electors of each county in the state, instead of half of the counties. In 1912, when the state legislature was unresponsive to the people, Ohio voters created a new state Constitution which included the ability for citizens to change the Ohio Constitution directly. Since then, Ohioans have been able to come together with potential change and place their proposals on the ballot for voters to approve or disapprove. This gives Ohioans a voice when the legislature is unwilling to exercise the will of the people.

Recently, the Ohio General Assembly has ignored the will of the people, the state constitution and the decisions of the Ohio Supreme Court. Unethical and unlawful, redistricting efforts have given one party an unfair advantage, a super majority and a means to propose and pass legislation that serves a partisan agenda and ignores a large portion of its citizenry. Much legislation has passed and continues to be proposed that is extremist and regressive in nature. On top of unfairly redistricting the state, HJR1 seeks to further consolidate partisan power and

disallow dissent. Raising the pass rate for a ballot initiative to 60% would give a minority of voters permanent veto power over the majority in Ohio. It is one power grab after another. It is shameless. It is undemocratic. It is without conscience.

Access to the ballot is one of our fundamental rights in Ohio and citizen led ballot initiatives are a way to circumvent a legislature that fails to listen to voters and ignores democratic norms. Having made a mockery of the redistricting process, made it more difficult to vote in Ohio, there are those that now want to further silence the voices of Ohio voters. This would lead to less power for the people, and more power for the legislature. What is more galling is the introduction of companion bills HB144 & SB92 to create an August Special Election just for this purpose after insisting that there should no longer be August elections with voter suppression bill HB 458.

The health of our democracy is failing and HJR1 will further that process. As an Ohio citizen, I respectfully request you vote NO on this Resolution.

Tony D'Ambrosio