



# THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE

## **Making it Easier for Disillusioned Voters to Dissolve Their Local Gov't**

Interested Party Testimony  
Ohio House Government Oversight Committee  
Ohio House Bill 331

Greg R. Lawson, Research Fellow  
The Buckeye Institute

May 7, 2024

As Prepared for Delivery

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding **Ohio House Bill 331**.

My name is Greg R. Lawson. I am the research fellow at **The Buckeye Institute**, an independent research and educational institution—a think tank—whose mission is to advance free-market public policy in the states.

House Bill 331 takes an excellent first step toward unknotting Ohio’s complex local government system.

Local government officials are often our friends, neighbors, and respected community members. And that makes them responsive to constituents in ways that state and federal officials are not. Unfortunately, Ohio’s local government structure has devolved into a complex, byzantine tax pyramid that supports overpriced, redundant government services. **More than 650 Ohio municipalities** levy income taxes, earning Ohio the **12<sup>th</sup> highest** local tax burden as a percentage of income in the country, and disproportionately hurting small businesses that must then file tax returns in dozens of jurisdictions across the state. Local tax compliance compounds the burden of local tax liability.

The Buckeye Institute has recommended local government reforms, including ground-up **consolidation** and **innovative ways** to eliminate state mandates on local governments, strategically use state financial assistance, and responsibly share local revenues and resources. House Bill 331 advances the ball by creating a standard, automatic process to determine whether Ohio villages meet the needs of their taxpaying constituents. The bill requires county budget commissions to assess the core services such as public safety and road maintenance provided in each village and also to determine whether at least one candidate appeared on the ballot for each elected village position. A village not meeting these standards will be barred from imposing additional tax liabilities and its dissolution will be presented to voters on the next general election ballot.

Should residents vote to dissolve their village, the services it provided would be assumed by the underlying township. And residents may choose not to dissolve a village, of course, but House Bill 331’s standard, automatic evaluation and ballot process replaces the time-consuming, cumbersome task of gathering enough community signatures to even hold a vote.

Constituents must have the last word in how much and what kind of government they want, and House Bill 331 makes it easier for them to have it.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions that the Committee might have.

### ***About The Buckeye Institute***

*Founded in 1989, The Buckeye Institute is an independent research and educational institution – a think tank – whose mission is to advance free-market public policy in the states.*

*The Buckeye Institute is a non-partisan, non-profit, and tax-exempt organization, as defined by section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue code. As such, it relies on support from individuals, corporations, and foundations that share a commitment to individual liberty, free enterprise, personal responsibility, and limited government. The Buckeye Institute does not seek or accept government funding.*

