

# HOUSE BILL 472 OHIO VOTES COUNT ACT

## PROPONENT TESTIMONY

Thank you Chairman Ghanbari and members of the Homeland Security Committee for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 472.

I am Gail Niederlehner and I had a former career in IT. I began researching Ohio's election's after learning the 2008 election was certified with 60,000 more votes than registered voters, over 8,000 from my own Butler County. I didn't believe it until I saw the information myself.

### VERIFY . VERIFY . VERIFY

This testimony focuses on the verification of registration form data, citizenship, and identity necessary for secure and accurate elections.

#### **Registration Form Data Verification:**

Many state agencies are required by federal law to distribute voter registration forms and forward completed forms to the Board of Elections, even though those agencies may have information about an applicant that contradicts data entered on the registration form. For example, an agency may have information that an applicant is not a citizen, but blindly forwards that application.

Many people seeking these services have language barriers and may not understand the qualifications to vote. [HB472 requires employees at agencies registering voters to be trained on eligibility requirements, provide an information sheet to all applicants, and look for application errors by comparing it to their records.](#)

Boards of Elections cannot validate a driver's license or the last 4 digits of a social security number. A paper registration applicant could literally make up any four digits and end up on Ohio's voter rolls. Boards cannot verify if the information provided is that of a citizen or whether the name, address, and birth date on BMV records match the information on the registration form.

[This bill gives election officials the statutory authority to acquire the necessary information to verify registration data. The Boards must verify the applicant is qualified before adding them to the voter rolls.](#) Ohio Job and Family Services and BMV have access to databases to verify identification and citizenship; isn't ensuring the eligibility to vote as important?

Under current law, if the Board is "satisfied as to the truth" on the voter registration form, the applicant is added to the voter rolls. How can Ohio maintain accurate voter rolls when ineligible voters can be added to the voter rolls without checking citizenship, identity, residency, or age?

These newly registered and potential ineligible voters now have full voting privileges and can sign a petition to amend Ohio's constitution.

Soon AFTER being added to the voter rolls, BMV and SSA records are used to validate the registration information. Why isn't this done BEFOREHAND?

If the records don't match, as was the case on over 252,000 social security system searches, a notice is mailed requesting corrections. If the voter does not respond, their voter record remains on the rolls for a minimum of **four years**. In the meantime, these unverified voters have full voting privileges, and can even have a mail-in ballot sent to an address outside of Ohio.

It is possible for a person to enter **any** four digits for a social security number, **any** name, **any** residence address, and **any** birth date on a paper voter registration form and that person will be added to Ohio's voter rolls and able to vote in **any** election in-person or by-mail.

### **US Citizenship Verification**

Due to the lack of up-front verification, non-citizens can obtain driver's licenses/state ids at the BMV and nothing prevents them from being added to Ohio voter rolls. Over 236,000 non-citizens have driver's licenses/state id's in Ohio, an increase of over 13,000 in the last year alone.

Current law requires the voter rolls be reviewed annually to identify non-citizens. The review does not identify all noncitizens and is not a sufficient safeguard to keep non-citizens from voting in Ohio.

The 2024 annual non-citizen review was performed in April, seven months before the November presidential election. **It is unacceptable that a non-citizen could register today, vote in the November 2024 election, and not be identified as a non-citizen until 2025 or at all.**

HB472 requires citizenship be verified using information already on file at state and federal agencies before a person is registered to vote, and replaces the annual non-citizen review with screenings that are conducted on a regular basis.

### **Identity Verification**

Many Ohioans have been notified their personal information has been compromised. In 2023 alone, the Federal Trade Commission reported over 34,000 identity theft complaints in Ohio, and the Department of Public Safety warned of a sophisticated scheme involving stolen personal information to access BMV accounts. Driver's license and social security numbers are no longer secure. Voter registration is not immune to identity theft, so there is a need for identity verification for all persons who register to vote.

HB472 requires the Secretary of State to develop a program to verify the identity of all applicants who do not register to vote in person.

### **Summary:**

I felt secure without locking my car doors in 1993, but times have changed, unlocked cars have become targets for theft, and today I lock my car doors to be secure. When the National Voter Registration Act was implemented in 1993, it may not have been necessary to verify registration information to have secure elections, but times have changed and today it is necessary to verify registration form data, citizenship, and identity for secure and accurate elections.

My sincere thanks to Representatives Bernie Willis and Bob Peterson for sponsoring this bill to improve the security and accuracy of Ohio's elections. I urge all committee members to support HB472, The Ohio Votes Count Act.

Thank you.