



Proponent Testimony on SB 71
by former Ohio Secretary of State Hon. Ken Blackwell
Senate General Government Committee
March 14, 2023

Chair Rulli, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the Senate General Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in favor of Senate Bill 71, the DATA Act, which creates a new Office of Data Analytics and Archives within the Office of the Secretary of State, codifies standard definitions of key election data points, and ensures transparency for the public in election data retention.

As your Secretary of State from 1999–2007, I know firsthand the difficulties of conducting an election in Ohio and the ongoing challenges we have faced to have open and transparent elections. It has taken time to get us to this point today, where our state is a leader in election integrity in the country.

It was not too long ago that Ohio faced significant issues, like other states, when it came to data recording and the election process. In fact, three Ohio counties even had more people registered to vote than the total voting-age population living in these counties. The difference we now see is thanks to the commitment and arduous work of elected officials like former Secretary of State Husted and current Secretary of State LaRose. Ohio is coming up with workable solutions to make our election data and our election process more accurate and transparent.

To continue the progress, Ohio is considering landmark legislation that would modernize Ohio’s election data and increase election transparency for good. Ohio needs SB 71.

This legislation would create a standardized uniform format for counties to follow when collecting election data. Requiring a uniform format will empower Ohioans with accurate data and allow us to look back on our elections to ensure that the voice of the people is heard.

The DATA Act was supported by the findings of the Center for Election Integrity report from the America First Policy Institute that highlighted issues around the country with data retention as mandated by the Civil Rights Act of 1960. More than six decades after that historic legislation became law, it remains just as important now as it was then. Ensuring that each citizen in America has the right to have their vote counted as cast is crucial, and transparency is the mechanism by which this right is assured.

Fundamental to a democratic republic is the civic engagement of its people. Lincoln himself stated that “Elections belong to the people.” This legislation is not a partisan measure; it is legislation that is truly by the people, for the people.



There is a reason Ohioans have confidence in our elections. In 2020 and 2022, Ohio was one of the first states to have its results reported. It has a history of transparent and effective Secretaries of State.

With this bill, confidence and trust in Ohio's elections will increase even more. This is a rarity during a time when many states election processes are under attack for irregularities, delays, and lack of transparency. SB 71 will make Ohio a leader in election transparency.

Sincerely,

Hon. J. Kenneth Blackwell
Chair, Center for Election Integrity
America First Policy Institute

