



SENATE GENERAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE – Proponent Testimony, Senate Joint Resolution 2, 4.18.23

Chairman Rulli, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to provide written testimony. My name is Jeff Dillon, and I am the Ohio Legislative Director for Americans for Prosperity (AFP). I submit to you today my organization's support for Senate Joint Resolution 2, sponsored by Senators McColley & Gavarone, which would require future amendments to the Ohio Constitution to be approved by at least 60% of the voters.

State constitutions are the cornerstones upon which systems of state government are built and therefore should not be altered frequently or with relative ease; when a renovation of a home or other type of property occurs to better suit current needs or to make it operate more efficiently, one typically doesn't begin that work at the foundation, but rather in other less drastic, less fundamental areas. To put it another way: statutory codes are those less drastic areas and should be the province wherein state public policy decisions are debated and discussed by the people's elected representatives, with input from constituents and interested parties. If passed, SJR 2 will ensure that the vast majority – nearly the entirety – of the Buckeye State's public policy is decided where it was meant to be decided, here in the halls of Ohio's General Assembly, and by local elected officials around the state.

Apart from the provision of SJR 2 requiring 60% approval from voters to amend the constitution, the provision requiring the signatures of at least 5% of electors in all 88 counties to bring an issue to the ballot is also worthy of support, ensuring that input from an adequate cross-section of Ohioans is being heard before attempting to alter the fabric of state government.

Lastly and importantly, it should not be more difficult for the elected representatives of the people to clear the hurdle to amend the Ohio Constitution than it is for the people. To even pass this chamber, SJR 2 will need to pass with 60 of 99 votes. However, for an out-of-state special interest to insert itself into our state's founding document, they only need to clear a 50% plus 1 threshold. Also, as pointed out during sponsor testimony, and by a great many others observing the debate around this legislation, the bipartisan Ohio Constitutional Modernization Commission has recommend doing what SJR 2 would do.

To amend the U.S. Constitution, the standard is the support of two thirds of members of each chamber of Congress, and three quarters of all state legislatures. Altering the founding principles of systems of government should be difficult and require great input and consent, just as altering the foundation of a building requires thoughtful, painstaking, arduous labor performed by well-trained workers. Under SJR 2, the possibility for citizen-initiated changes to the Ohio Constitution and the Ohio Revised Code will still remain in effect, and the people will still have every right to engage their elected representatives at any point throughout Ohio's biennial General Assembly cycle. Lawmakers make laws, citizens provide input, then hold those lawmakers accountable at the ballot box if they deem the work done on their behalf to be unacceptable. The people are not lawmakers, but it is the duty of lawmakers to be responsive to the people. And should SJR 2 pass this committee and this chamber, the people will ultimately decide the question and have the final say in the debate surrounding this legislation; they will choose to consent, or not, to the changes contained herein.

Thank you again, Chairman, for the opportunity to submit written testimony. If any members of the committee should have questions for me, please contact the Chair for my contact information and I will gladly discuss AFP's position on this matter in further detail.

Jeff Dillon

Ohio Legislative Director, Americans for Prosperity

Americans for Prosperity (AFP) exists to recruit, educate, and mobilize citizens in support of the policies and goals of a free society at the local, state, and federal level, helping every American live their dream – especially the least fortunate. AFP has more than 3.2 million activists across the nation, a local infrastructure that includes 36 state chapters, and has received financial support from more than 100,000 Americans in all 50 states. For more information, visit www.AmericansForProsperity.org.