
Auglaize County Board of Elections

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April 17, 2023

The Honorable Michael A. Rulli
General Government Committee, Chair
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square, 1st Floor - 143
Columbus, OH 43215

Senator Rulli,

We are writing you today with regards to the recently introduced Senate Bill 92 concerning a proposed August special election. Election officials across Ohio were excited to finally have their voices heard when HB 458 passed and eliminated August special elections, however, we now find ourselves having the same discussion. While workload and burnout have left Ohio faced with a large turnover of election officials, there are also administrative hurdles that need to be taken into consideration. Because of the precedence that has been set by the passage of HB 458, allocating funds and securing polling locations will be difficult.

Boards of Elections have experienced high turnover, especially in the Director and Deputy Director positions. This is due to workload and burnout that election officials are dealing with due to the ever changing timelines and statewide special elections being called. Institutional knowledge is quickly fleeing Ohio boards of elections, which is a recipe for failure heading into the 2024 Presidential election cycle. If the General Assembly desires Ohio to continue to be a leader in Elections, members need to look beyond the needs of Columbus politics and look to the needs of those who make democracy happen. Sadly, when the General Assembly passes legislation to eliminate August special elections, then introduces legislation to bring it back, we as election officials lose faith in the process.

From an administrative stand point, the upcoming deadlines for the November 7, 2023 General Election will create hardships for boards of elections to complete both requirements simultaneously. The filing deadline for the November 7, 2023 General Election will be the day after the proposed special election, Wednesday, August 9, 2023. This filing is for townships, school boards, municipalities in addition to tax levies, bond issues and local liquor options. This could result in 70+ filings in Auglaize County, not to mention the quick turnaround needed to certify not only the proposed special election, but the candidates as well.

Looking ahead, currently we have a filing deadline of December 20, 2023 for the March 19, 2024 Presidential Primary. With this deadline less than 9 months away, our board must prepare for new district maps to be passed by the General Assembly so that we can program our registration system and ballot tabulation system. We are hopeful that this can take place with a reasonable amount of time, so that once again our board will not be down to the wire to complete the requirements. Again, looking back to the high turnover, expecting new Directors and Deputy Directors with zero election experience to administer an election, plus meet these demands is a recipe for failure.

Last year's August special election cost the tax payers of Auglaize County \$49,305.05 to conduct. While the General Assembly did provide over \$20,000,000 to boards of elections last year and proposes to again this year, the cost for low a voter turnout election is unjustifiable from an administrative stand point. We prepared the 2023 election cycle without an August special election in mind because the General Assembly eliminated them, this means boards of elections didn't include that election date to regular polling locations, didn't list it as a possibility to poll workers, didn't budget for the cost, planned personal time off, etc. Secretary of State Frank LaRose even bragged at our annual winter conference during his speech about eliminating August special elections.

In conclusion, we ask that you oppose SB 92. Boards of elections in Ohio have held up to our end of the deal, we ask that members of the General Assembly hold up to theirs in keeping August special elections eliminated. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact us.

Respectfully,


Auglaize County Board of Elections


Michelle L. Wilcox, Director


Francia Engle, Board Chairperson


Luke Scott, Deputy Director


Diana Dulebohn, Board Member


Rodney Metz, Board Member


Joe Kuhn, Board Member