

I am David Payne, Deputy Director of the Franklin County Board of Elections. I have held that position since April of 2015.

I am honored to come to these chambers to testify in favor of Senate Bill 173 sponsored by (Senators Gavarone and DeMora).

I would like to thank Senator DeMora and Senator Gavarone for jointly sponsoring – what I believe to be a reasonable and sensible bi-partisan bill.

In Franklin County we have;

- 889,000 Registered voters
- 52 Fulltime Board of Election employees (26 Rs and 26 Ds).
- 150 Part-time, Seasonal employees
- 5,000 Poll workers

These poll workers work for little pay, to make certain that residents of Franklin County can exercise their right to vote and have confidence that the elections are fair, impartial and accurate.

We often get public information requests for poll worker and election officials home addresses. Sometimes these requests are simply to write notes and thank our poll workers for a job well done. Other times, we don't know the nature of the requests.

In my 9 years as the Deputy Director of the Franklin County Board of Elections, it seems that aggression toward election officials and poll workers has intensified.

- We had a man come to the polls and threaten poll workers after his wife was made to vote a provisional ballot.
- Voters have photographed and videoed poll workers and Bd. of Election employees with their cell phones in an attempt to intimidate them.
- We have had incidents where poll workers no longer want to work the polls because of increased harassment and fear for their safety.
- My biggest concern are those people that say elections are rigged or stolen

As recently as two weeks ago we had a candidate for Franklin County Prosecutor make irresponsible and inflammatory claims about elections being “stolen” in Franklin County.

This irresponsible and inflammatory rhetoric puts Board of Elections staff and our nearly 5,000 poll workers at risk.

We are all aware that there have been serious threats, violence and intimidation against poll workers and election officials in Georgia, Nevada, Arizona, Michigan, Washington, California and Oregon.

Saying that elections are stolen in Franklin County can have real consequences. It is only by the grace of God that we have avoided any actual violence against our poll workers and election officials. But, make no mistake, unsubstantiated claims that elections are stolen in Franklin County put our people at real risk.

I think S.B. Bill 173 is a step in the right direction toward making our poll workers and election officials safer and more secure.

Thank you for permitting me to testify.