



Chair Ray, Vice Chair Fischer, Ranking Member Brent and members of the Ohio House General Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of House Bill 16, legislation which will establish in Ohio Revised Code certain helpful standards for community associations to refer to in the development of community rules encouraging the timely, appropriate display of political yard signage on individual resident units.

My name is Robin Strohm. Professionally, I work as a partner and attorney with the law firm Williams & Strohm, LLC, where I have represented Ohio community associations (condominium and homeowners' associations) since 2004. I come to you today on behalf of the Ohio Community Associations Institute (CAI) and our Legislative Action Committee, on which I currently serve as President.

Chapters 5311 and 5312 of the Ohio Revised Code, (the "Ohio Condominium Act" and the "Ohio Planned Community Act"), both provide certain authorities to community associations governed by a volunteer board of directors whose members are elected by residents of their community. While Ohio community associations come in many forms and sizes, all associations share three basic characteristics:

1. membership in the association is mandatory and automatic for all property owners;
2. the community association governing documents bind all owners to defined land-use or residential use requirements administered by the community association; and,
3. all property owners pay mandatory lien-based assessments that fund association operations intended to support the aesthetic character and property values of the community.

Under current law, Ohio community associations are permitted, but not required, to adopt rules allowing residents to display political signage on their individual units or lots. Many Ohio community associations at present have rules prohibiting the display of political signage, in addition to other signs, and those prohibitions have been in place since the initial recording of the restrictions by the Developer. Should the will of the General Assembly be to amend current law to disallow this kind of outright ban, House Bill 16 delivers an appropriate compromise.

House Bill 16 provides certain allowances for community associations to retain the ability to adopt and enforce reasonable rules and regulations concerning the time, size, location, and manner by which individual residents would be permitted to display political signs on their individual units or lots. The provision establishing 30 days from an election day as the "safe harbor" period in which individuals must be allowed to display yard signs is based in zoning standards enforced by certain municipalities around the state. The interests of associations and their boards are balanced by clarifying and supporting community associations' existing authority to limit political signs permitted for display to a standard size typical of those mounted on wire stakes, and allowing further rulemaking regulating the materials and number of signs allowed per unit.

CAI appreciates the nuanced direction which the joint sponsors, Representatives Lorenz and Hall, have taken in the development of House Bill 16 to incorporate the needs and perspectives of community associations into this legislation. CAI respects the right of citizens to freedom but also recognizes that right is not unlimited. As such, CAI also recognizes and supports the rights of residential community associations to establish reasonable regulations on display of political signs within their communities. Afterall, each homeowner voluntarily moved into the HOA understanding that restrictions and rules exist; and many homeowners moved into the HOA *because* those restrictions exist.



We believe House Bill 16 in its current form provides sufficient guardrails to support the core principle of community self-governance and co-ownership of common property essential to the community association housing model. CAI would respectfully request that members continue to consider these fundamental values of Ohio planned communities as work continues on the legislation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present this testimony today. I would be happy to field any questions committee members may have at this time.

Sincerely,

Robin L. Strohm

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Chair, CAI Ohio Legislative Action Committee