

Testimony Opposing Amended Senate Bill 293
Before the Senate General Government Committee
Wednesday, November 5, 2023
Submitted by Janine Migden-Ostrander

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Brent, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding Senate Bill 293. My name is Janine Migden-Ostrander, an Ohio resident, and I urge you not to pass this Bill.

The stated purpose of this legislation is to enhance the integrity and efficiency of the absentee voting process, but no issues with absentee voting have been identified so as to justify this legislation. In Ohio last November, more than 9,500 ballots were received during the four-day post-election window according to the Ohio Absentee and Early Voting Dashboard. If Amended Senate Bill 293 had been in effect last year, those 9,500 ballots which were properly filled out, postmarked on time, and mailed by the legal deadline would have been discarded simply because of postal delays. This would have the effect of denying thousands of Ohio citizens of their constitutional right to vote and have those votes counted. And to what end? Where is there a problem with absentee voting that requires a remedy such as this Bill to fix it? This Bill is an arbitrary and capricious attempt - like several other Bills introduced this session – to limit the ability of people to vote. Once the ballot is mailed, it is out of the voter’s control whether the ballot arrives in two days or seven days. Voters would be punished for something completely outside their control: the speed of the mail.

SB 293 will especially harm:

- Rural Ohio voters: reduced postal service days slower routes can result in longer delivery times, thereby disenfranchising these voters;
- For Ohio seniors and Ohioans with disabilities voting by mail is a much more viable option since they may not be able to travel to the polling booth; and,
- Ohio voters without reliable transportation often can’t make it to the polls. Ohioans living in poverty or rural areas and students who often don’t have their own vehicles would be disproportionately impacted.

Note that the current law requires mail-in ballots to be mailed the day before election day. It simply provides the post office with an extra four days to complete its job and get the ballot

delivered to the county board of elections. Ohio's current system works well. Don't try to fix what is not broken.

Ohioans have relied on mailed-in ballots for years. Of the more than 2.6 million Ohioans who voted before Election Day last November, 803,253 (31%), used absentee ballots according to Ohio Absentee and Early Voting Dashboard. That's a lot of votes that would be placed in jeopardy, should Amended Senate Bill 293.

Based on the foregoing, I urge you to reject SB 293 as unnecessary and not in the public interest.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

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