

Ohio House General Government Committee  
Opponent Testimony of Susan D. Appel  
November 18, 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Ray, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Brent, and Members of the House General Government Committee. My name is Susan Appel and I am submitting testimony today as an interested party in opposition to Senate Bill 293. I am an Ohio resident, an attorney, and a voter protection volunteer. I have either worked as a poll worker or volunteered as a poll observer in almost every election since 2008. Additionally, I have spent innumerable hours as a volunteer manning a voter assistance hotline during election seasons.

I am also an Ohioan for whom voting by mail has been critical. Merely weeks after my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, as a college freshman, attending an out-of-state college, I cast my very first ballot as an Ohio absentee voter. A year later, I voted by mail in my first presidential election. The ability to vote by mail enabled me to be able to vote in my home state throughout college and law school.

Voting by mail is equally critical for other Ohio voters – those attending school outside of Ohio, military members, voters who are elderly or have disabilities, Ohioans who are traveling on Election Day, whether for business or pleasure, and many others.

In the 2025 General Election, 169,941 Ohioans voted by mail.<sup>1</sup> 7,274 of those ballots arrived in the four days after Election Day. By far, the greatest number of mail-in ballots requested and returned were by Ohioans 65 and older. Of those, 114,447 ballots were cast by mail by seniors. In 2025, 51,550 Republicans voted by mail, along with 64,602 Democrats and 52,654 voters not affiliated with either party.

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<sup>1</sup>Ohio Secretary of State, <https://www.ohiosos.gov/elections/voters/ohio-absentee-data/>.

For the 2024 election, in which President Trump was elected, 1,078,103 voters voted by mail. 9,637 of these ballots arrived by mail in the four days after Election Day. Again, those over 65 voted by mail significantly more often than any other demographic group, with 518,103 mail-in votes cast by seniors. Unaffiliated voters cast 672,768 mail-in ballots, while Republicans cast 215,769 and Democrats cast only 189,563 votes by mail. Note that 5,851,387 electors voted in the 2024 election<sup>2</sup>. Thus, just over 18% of Ohio voters chose to vote by mail.

Limiting the time frame to return absentee ballots is unnecessary and will seriously impact the ability of Ohioans to vote.

The U.S. Postal Service has struggled in recent years to deliver mail in a timely manner. The U.S. Postal Service website indicates that the expected delivery for first class mail is 1-5 days.<sup>3</sup> Just last week, Postmaster David Steiner spoke to the U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors noted that, while service performance is improving, “service is still not where we expect it to be, or is it what customers deserve.” He noted that customers can expect delivery of mail, on average, in “less than three days.”<sup>4</sup> This means that it is highly probable that a ballot timely postmarked in the last few days before Election Day will not arrive until after Election Day, not because of the voter but because of the vagaries of the U.S. Postal Service. Today, I searched the U.S. Postal Service website<sup>5</sup> and for how long a piece of first class mail would take to be delivered from my zip code to the Hamilton County Board of Elections’ zip code. The expected delivery date, if I mailed it before 10:30 AM, is Thursday, November 20. If I mailed it after 4 PM, the expected

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.ohiosos.gov/elections/election-results-and-data/historical-election-comparisons/voter-turnout-in-general-elections/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.usps.com/ship/mail-shipping-services.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <https://about.usps.com/newsroom/national-releases/2025/1114-pmg-ceo-david-steiner-remarks-during-the-nov-14-usps-bog-meeting.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <https://postcalc.usps.com/ServiceCommitments>

delivery date is Friday, November 21. Note that I live 11 miles from the Hamilton County BOE, and yet it would take 3-4 days for my ballot to be delivered.

Allowing ballots to be counted as long as they are received within a reasonable time after Election Day allows voters a cushion of a few days as long as their ballots are postmarked before Election Day. It is a small concession that allows more Ohioans, particularly our seniors, to have their votes count and their voices heard.

Shortening this period will result in more voters voting a provisional ballot on Election Day, concerned because their BOE website does not yet show their mail-in ballot as received. This is not a hypothetical. Not being able to verify that ballots were received was a significant source of concern for those voters with whom I spoke on the voter hotline in the last few days before the November 2024 elections. Additional provisional ballots will increase the burden on poll workers, who have to follow a more onerous process for provisional ballots, and for the BOE employees, who will have to examine all of those additional provisionals to make sure that the vote by mail ballot did not also arrive at the BOE. These additional voters will create longer lines and more confusion at the polling locations.

All of this, of course, assumes that the voter can go and vote in person on Election Day, which simply is not possible for those who live or are traveling out of state, who have to work, are hospitalized, sick, or disabled, or who have no transportation to the polls, which is likely why they were voting by mail.

Finally, I recognize that the sponsors of this bill have concerns about vote by mail fraud. The reality is that voting by mail is effective and safe. The Heritage Foundation's voter fraud

search reflects, from 1982 to 2025, nine cases of absentee ballot-related fraud in Ohio.<sup>6</sup> News21’s database reflects six cases from 2000-2012.<sup>7</sup> Nationwide, from 2016 through 2022, vote by mail fraud accounted for 0.000043% of the total votes cast, according to the Brookings Institution<sup>8</sup>. In other words, the risk of mail-in voter fraud is infinitesimal, and Ohio has stringent laws in place to prosecute any wrongdoers. Even Secretary of State Frank LaRose has opined that “Ohio is the national gold standard for election administration” with a 99.99% accuracy rate in the May 2025 election.<sup>9</sup>

This bill is a solution in search of a problem. In contrast, the “solution” would disenfranchise thousands of Ohio voters, particularly those over 65, a risk that vastly outweighs the risk of mail-in vote fraud. I urge you to vote no on SB 293.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://electionfraud.heritage.org/search>. Please note that the Brookings Institution study, cited in footnote 8 below, acknowledges that this database is not comprehensive, but based on their research, they state: “[w]e have reason to believe that this limited scope did not meaningfully distort our overall findings.”

<sup>7</sup> <https://votingrights.news21.com/interactive/election-fraud-database/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/mail-voting-in-the-us-data-points-to-very-low-fraud-and-significant-benefits-to-voters/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ohiosos.gov/media-center/press-releases/2025/2025-07-16/>