



County Engineers Association of Ohio

Senate Finance Committee

John Olivieri, Executive Director

Sub HB 96 – Main Operating Budget – Interested Party

May 30, 2025

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Committee:

County Engineers across Ohio strongly oppose recent efforts by a few advocating for legislative changes to the statutory qualifications required to hold the office of County Engineer. These actions represent not a governance improvement, but a power grab - a deliberate attempt to dilute professional standards for political expediency, centralize control, and undermine the constitutional and statutory integrity of a vital public office.

Attempts to “reform” the office under the pretense of increasing candidate availability are not about expanding access; they are about consolidating influence over technical functions they do not understand or oversee. By advocating for reduced qualifications, some seek to weaken the office and open the door for less-qualified or politically aligned individuals to assume control of one of the most technically demanding roles in county government.



This is not reform, it is a dismantling of public safeguards designed to protect private property rights, infrastructure integrity, safety, and professional independence.

While there have been isolated instances, much like with the Office of County Prosecutor, where only a limited number of individuals meet the criteria to run for County Engineer, the ALL counties have successfully filled the position without extended vacancies. The solution is not to lower the professional standards for a role entrusted with managing millions in public infrastructure, ensuring highway safety,

overseeing floodplain management, and protecting property boundaries.

No one would propose allowing someone without a law license to serve as County Prosecutor or County Judge simply because there were “too few candidates.” Similarly, allowing an

individual to hold the office of County Engineer without the required Professional Surveyor or Engineer credentials undermines the role's integrity, risks public safety, and sets a dangerous precedent for devaluing expertise in public office.

Instead of weakening standards, counties facing recruitment challenges should focus on:

- Expanding succession pipelines through mentoring, scholarships, and internship programs similar to the programs that the State has for rural lawyers, nurses and veterinarians.
- Collaborating regionally on project management resources
- Exploring shared service models where appropriate—without stripping qualifications

The legal and functional responsibilities of the County Engineer are deeply rooted in the Ohio Revised Code, with multiple sections, such as §315.02, §315.14, §6131.14, and §5713.09, explicitly or implicitly requiring the authority to perform surveying-related duties. These include conducting and certifying boundary surveys, maintaining public land records and plats, overseeing conveyance standards and right-of-way determinations, and designing infrastructure improvements that rely on accurate property mapping. Removing the Professional Surveyor (PS) qualification would not only compromise the County Engineer's ability to fulfill these statutory obligations, but also expose counties and townships to significant legal liability, costly delays, and rework due to insufficient technical oversight. The PS licensure is not an arbitrary standard—it is essential to ensuring lawful, efficient, and professionally sound execution of public responsibilities.

If the voice of a few can persuade the legislature to strip licensure qualification from the County Engineer needed to run, what stops future efforts to erode qualifications for other County offices? This is not just about one office, it is about protecting the institutional independence and technical integrity of county government.

The County Engineer is not simply an administrative function; it is a constitutionally and statutorily protected professional role requiring independent judgment, technical certification, and legal responsibility for public safety. Efforts to reduce or remove the dual licensure requirement are not genuine attempts to modernize government - they are thinly veiled efforts to politicize a professional office.

We urge the legislature to reject any proposal driven by local political pressure and instead stand firm in preserving the professionalism, safety, and integrity of the County Engineer's office.

The Cost of Removing the PS Requirement for County Engineers

The following chart outlines the financial and operational hardships various stakeholders will face if the Professional Surveyor (PS) qualification is removed from the statutory requirements for County Engineers. The analysis demonstrates wide-ranging impacts across

public and private sectors, each bearing real financial, legal, and service delivery consequences.

Without it, counties and their partners will face rising costs, legal uncertainty, and weakened infrastructure support systems. We urge legislators consider these documented consequences before moving forward with any statutory changes.

Stakeholder	Added Cost	Risk	Result
Counties	\$100k–\$350k/yr in consulting fees	Budget strain, slower approvals	Higher county spending, longer timelines
Title Companies	\$500–\$2,500 per transaction	More insurance claims, client frustration	Increased premiums, survey rechecks
Developers	\$5k–\$20k per project in delays and services	Financing gaps, schedule slippage	Lower developer interest, lost deals
Property Owners	\$500–\$3,000 per closing for additional surveys and legal fees	Legal disputes, unclear boundaries	Increased closing costs, buyer dissatisfaction
School Districts	\$50k–\$100k per delayed construction phase	Delays in construction, budget overruns	Higher school construction bids, state penalty risk
Municipal Planning & Zoning Boards	\$10k–\$50k in delayed approvals, legal errors, and consultant reviews	Reduced development control and record accuracy	Planning delays, rezoning issues
Utility Companies	\$20k–\$200k per utility project if errors or delays occur	Relocation costs, legal disputes, safety issues	Disruption of service plans, contractor conflict
County Prosecutors & Courts	\$25k–\$100k per year in litigation prep and defense	Weakened case support, increased litigation risk	More staff time, reduced credibility in court
Appraisers and Assessors	\$5k–\$25k annually in assessment errors and appeals	Tax disputes, incorrect valuations	Revenue loss, taxpayer distrust
State Departments (ODOT, ODNR, OEPA)	\$10k–\$50k per project in duplicate surveys and delays	Coordination breakdowns, added compliance hurdles	Delays in permitting and approvals
Economic Development Corporations (EDCs)	\$50k–\$250k in lost opportunity costs and delays	Fewer shovel-ready sites, less competitive	Lost employer attraction, reduced investment
Parks & Land Conservancies	\$10k–\$50k per acquisition or easement dispute	Boundary disputes, legal confusion	Halted land projects, lost conservation funds
HOAs and Property Managers	\$5k–\$25k per subdivision in disputes and legal consultation	HOA enforcement breakdowns, internal disputes	Unclear common areas, internal lawsuits

Townships	\$25k–\$150k annually in consulting, delays, and plat errors	Loss of in-house engineering and surveying support	Greater reliance on private consultants, reduced oversight, slower project execution
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Supporting Citations

1. Land Survey Costs: Land surveys typically cost between \$800 and \$5,500 depending on property size, terrain, and complexity. (Source: Angi - <https://www.angi.com/articles/how-much-does-land-survey-cost.htm>)
2. Title Insurance Claims: Boundary disputes without title insurance can cost thousands of dollars and cause months of uncertainty. (Source: Federal Title - <https://www.federaltitle.com/how-title-insurance-protects/>)
3. Construction Delays: Construction delays often lead to additional costs including labor, materials, and lost opportunity. (Source: Outbuild - <https://www.outbuild.com/blog/how-construction-delays-can-lead-to-additional-expenses>)
4. Quiet Title Actions: Legal costs to resolve boundary disputes (quiet title actions) can range from \$1,500 to \$5,000+. (Source: Investopedia - <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/q/quiet-title-action.asp>)