



Ohio Senate

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Senator Theresa Gavarone

Senate Majority Floor Leader
2nd District

Chair Roegner, and fellow Members of the Senate General Government Committee, thank you for the allowing me the opportunity to testify today on Senate Bill 4. This legislation would create the Election Integrity Unit within the Ohio Secretary of State's office.

As many know, working to improve the integrity and confidence of Ohio's elections has been a cornerstone of my legislative agenda. In fact, my first bill as a member of the Senate created what some have described as the most stringent post-election auditing requirements in the country. In the 134th General Assembly, we furthered that work by overwhelmingly passing HB 458, which, among many other solutions that I wrote into the law, added the commonsense provision, supported by 80% of Americans, to require Ohioans to show a photo ID to vote.

Last General Assembly, I introduced the DATA act, which created standardized definitions, creating greater transparency in our elections and further cementing our standing as a national leader.

Two years ago, Secretary LaRose announced the creation of the Public Integrity Unit within his office. That division deals with not just elections, but also campaign finance and business filings. Senate Bill 4 focuses solely on codifying the election-related portion of that division because that part has a high probability of elimination in the future should we not have a Secretary of State as dedicated to election security and voter confidence as Secretary LaRose is.

The Election Integrity Unit will be required to investigate allegations of election fraud and voter suppression, allow the public to submit complaints, refer cases to a prosecutor, law enforcement, or another state or federal agency for review, and submit a report to the General Assembly detailing the number of complaints and people referred for investigation. If there is inaction by the county prosecutor on cases referred by the Election Integrity Unit, then the Attorney General may proceed with the prosecution.

Chair Roegner, it cannot be disputed that voter fraud is real. It happens. Some people seem to have the opinion that a little bit of voter fraud is fine or just the cost of doing business. Not me. One case of voter fraud is too much and I believe the Election Integrity Unit will make it easier to not just prevent it, but prosecute people who try to undermine our elections systems and, by definition, our Republic.

Ohio has a sterling reputation as an elections leader. However, that does not mean we should be complacent. It is my belief that if we are not actively trying to improve our elections then we are moving backwards and asking for trouble. There is no doubt that this bill will improve the election process in Ohio.



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Chairman Roegner, thank you for the chance to testify on behalf of Senate Bill 4, and I am ready to answer any questions members may have.