



**Senators Theresa Gavarone and Andrew Brenner**  
**Sponsor Testimony: Senate Bill 153**

Chair Roegner and Members of the Senate General Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 153, legislation that would further secure our elections by requiring proof of citizenship to vote, modifying election petitions, increasing transparency on when circulators are paid, and ending ballot drop boxes.

Ohio is the gold standard when it comes to running elections. Over the last several years, the Ohio General Assembly has taken action to even further secure our elections with new laws that require photo ID to vote, while also ending a campaign finance loophole that allowed foreign billionaires contribute to ballot issue campaigns. While we have taken these steps, the work does not end there. We can not be complacent about election security. That is why we are excited to introduce Senate Bill 153.

It is simple, if you are a citizen, and you can provide proof of your citizenship, you can vote in our elections. It's that easy. The vast majority of people provide proof of citizenship when getting a driver license or state ID and the BMV can verify citizenship in those cases. You would think this notion would be widely supported, but sadly, we have groups who think this is not necessary and some who believe should allow non-citizens to vote. This is perplexing since we are talking about one the institutions at the very core of our Republic. In what world should someone who has not taken the steps to become a citizen in our great country and live in our state be able to vote in our elections? Now, if you are not a citizen, but you

want to vote, become a United States citizen and then you may go vote. Election security should always be one of our main priorities. In fact, it is a priority in the minds of an overwhelmingly majority of Americans. Polling has shown that stopping non-citizens from voting is important. For example, according to a Pew Research Center Poll, 90% of Americans support a citizenship requirement to vote.<sup>1</sup>

After introducing this legislation, President Trump issued an Executive Order to protect the integrity of our elections. Parts of this order are already Ohio law, including the ban on foreign nationals participating in elections, led by the Senate last General Assembly in Senate Bill 215. Not only does this Order align closely with work we have already completed to further strengthen Ohio elections, but it also continues the work we are doing in Senate Bill 153.

In addition to requiring proof of citizenship to vote, Senate Bill 153 will put an end to drop boxes. Ballot drop boxes are a major weakness in our elections as they allow for anyone at anytime to tamper with ballots. This is dangerous and could have drastic results on the outcome of an election. Moreover, we heard from a County Board of Election where they described how trash had been tossed into their ballot drop box. This act could severely damage or destroy ballots all together, meaning the outcome of an election could be altered. In the states of Washington and Oregon, drop boxes were firebombed, destroying hundreds of ballots.<sup>2</sup> Just one ballot destroyed could make all the difference in an election. To put this into perspective, in the 2021 election, 18 local races ended in a tie, and in the 2024 election 6 races ended in either a tie or within 1 vote. Now imagine if trash was thrown into a drop box in a county that came down to a single vote, that destroyed ballot could make a difference in the result.

After introducing Senate Bill 153, we have heard comments that we have a solution to a problem that does not exist. 138 individuals had voted in prior elections, yet they lacked citizenship status at the time of voting. Just one case of a noncitizen voting unacceptable. Moreover, we have heard this same argument for drop boxes, which makes no sense considering every home has a drop box

1. [Ensuring only eligible citizens cast ballots](#)

2. [Fires set in drop boxes destroy hundreds of ballots in Washington and damage 3 in Oregon](#)

right outside; the mailbox.

Chair Roegner, election security should always be one of our main priorities. By taking these steps in Senate Bill 153, we are not only improving election security, but we are creating greater voter confidence in our elections.

Thank you again for allowing us to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 153. We would be more than happy to answer any questions the committee may have.