

Senator Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone and Ranking Member Blackshear:

I am David Payne, Deputy Director of the Franklin County Board of Elections. I have held that position since April of 2015.

I am honored to come to these chambers to testify in favor of Senate Bill 82 sponsored by (Senator Gavarone and Senator DeMora).

I would like to thank both Senator DeMora and Senator Gavarone for jointly sponsoring – what I believe to be a reasonable and sensible bi-partisan bill.

In Franklin County we have;

- 889,000 Registered voters
- 52 Fulltime Board of Election employees (26 Rs and 26 Ds).
- 150 Part-time, Seasonal employees

These bi-partisan election officials work hard to make certain that residents of Franklin County can exercise their right to vote and have confidence that the elections are fair, impartial and accurate.

We often get public information requests for election officials home addresses. Sometimes these requests are simply made to

write notes and thank us for a job well done. Other times, we don't know the nature of the requests.

In my 9 years as the Deputy Director of the Franklin County Board of Elections, it seems that aggression toward election officials has intensified.

We receive regular security briefings from the Columbus Police Department, Franklin County Sheriff's Dept., Franklin County E.M.A. and Homeland Security. All of these agencies have advised us to have regular active shooter training for our employees at the Franklin County Board of Elections.

- We had a man come to the polls and threaten workers after his wife was made to vote a provisional ballot.
- Voters have photographed and videoed Bd. of Election employees with their cell phones in an attempt to intimidate them.
- We have had reports of election officials throughout Ohio, that no longer want to work elections, because of increased harassment and fear for their safety.
- Voters and campaigners have become increasingly more aggressive toward our election officials at our Early Vote Center.
- I was personally spat upon while attempting to appease a disgruntled voter.

- Our staff have been accused of conspiring with North Korea, Russia and China.
- It is not uncommon for voters and members of the public to claim that our voting machines are connected to the internet and votes are being hacked.
- My biggest concern are these people that say that our elections are rigged or stolen.

Recently we had a candidate for Franklin County Prosecutor make irresponsible and inflammatory claims to the Columbus Dispatch about elections being “stolen” in Franklin County.

This irresponsible and inflammatory rhetoric puts Board of Elections staff at risk.

We are all aware that there have been serious threats of violence and intimidation against election officials in Georgia, Nevada, Arizona, Michigan, Washington, California and Oregon.

Saying that elections are stolen in Franklin County can have real consequences. I have said it before and I will say it again - It is only by the grace of God that have we avoided any actual physical violence against our election officials. But, make no mistake, unsubstantiated claims that elections are stolen in Franklin County put our people at real risk.

I think S.B. Bill 82 is a step in the right direction toward making our election officials safer and more secure.

Thank you for permitting me to testify.