



**Testimony by Kelly Dufour, Common Cause Ohio
Before the Senate General Government Committee on
Senate Bill 153
May 27, 2025**

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear and members of the Senate General Government Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide opposition testimony on Senate Bill 153.

My name is Kelly Dufour and I'm the voting and elections manager at Common Cause Ohio. Common Cause is a nonpartisan organization focused on strengthening public participation in our democracy and ensuring that our government is transparent and accountable to its citizens.

Senate Bill 153 would disenfranchise eligible voters, potentially criminalize Ohioans for just being on the rolls, and create impossible, unfunded mandates for the county Boards of Elections, the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, and the Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

Not only does Senate Bill 153 create two new buckets of work for election officials — preemptive voter registration and petition circulator vetting, but it also removes existing efficiencies like drop boxes and support from other entities already collecting voter registrations, like schools, libraries and supporting organizations.

Senate Bill 153 is riddled with ways clerical errors could result in compromising an eligible citizen's registration status and their vote, to the point of requiring criminal investigation for failure to reply to a mailed request. Senate Bill 153 also uses provisional voting as a default response for any question of voter status. Relying heavily on provisional ballots risks large-scale disenfranchisement of voters, creates a significant increase in administrative work for Boards of Elections, and creates unnecessary costs to taxpayers.

I've watched Boards of Elections try to respond to the rushed, confusing layering of House Bill 458, the Data Act, House Bill 74 and temporary directives. Where election officials not only try to understand the changes but must find resources to implement change after change, often during active election cycles.

Did you know:

- The Ohio Election Official Manual is 457 pages long? It was last updated in February, outdated 2 months later; Secretary of State LaRose told election officials not to print it out if they could help it.
- Since April 2023, there have been 73 sections of revised code amended, 11 new sections created and one removed ([HB458](#), [SubHB33](#), [HB74](#))

- The Bureau of Motor Vehicles just began electronically transferring data to the Secretary of State last month! Prior to April, hard copies were being mailed and transcribed.

To call the last two years in Ohio's election administration "challenging" is mild.

Senate Bill 153 would amend another 46 sections and create three new sections of revised code, with no meaningful analysis; the "fiscal note" offers only four monetary references — a \$1.60 cost for postage, and the rest are penalties on voters! The bill creates unfunded mandates and even after a fiscal analysis, the true costs of this election overhaul remain unknown.

Last month, Sec. LaRose presented testimony to a US Congressional subcommittee on elections outlining continued deficiencies with the US Postal System he would like to see addressed¹. This list consisted of inconsistent training, exceptionally long delivery times, and mail incorrectly returned as undeliverable was also sent to Post Master LeJoy in September 2024 by the National Association of Secretaries of State, and endorsed by the Ohio Association of Election Officials.²

Senate Bill 153 would rely on this inadequate postal system for the bulk of required voter registration confirmation and investigations for prosecution.

In December, Sec. LaRose told reporters that lawmakers should consider expanding early in-person voting locations.³ Expanding voting access is found nowhere in this 200 page bill, but instead, drop boxes would be eliminated and election officials would spend untold time inspecting who is on the rolls, regardless of who actually votes.

What is the problem trying to be solved with Senate Bill 153?

The only concern I heard mentioned at prior hearings is drop box security. I wanted to be sure to remind this committee that unlike many other states, lawmakers have already restricted drop boxes to only Boards of Election offices and require 24/7 security surveillance. There is not a single incidence noted in Ohio.

Please slow down, understand the changes you've already instituted, and work with county election officials across the state to create meaningful, incremental improvements to election administration. The dashboard management efforts and attention on efficient and accurate data collection are noteworthy updates, but election officials need the space and time to properly incorporate changes.

I urge the committee to Vote 'No' on Senate Bill 153. Thank you.

¹ <https://files.constantcontact.com/b01249ec501/b49abf46-087c-4446-a862-2a20707da58c.pdf?rdr=true>

² https://www.nass.org/sites/default/files/NASS%20Letters/9.11.24%20NASS_NASED%20Letter%20to%20US%20Postmaster%20DeJoy.pdf

³ <https://signalcleveland.org/secretary-of-state-frank-larose-says-ohio-should-expand-early-in-person-voting-locations/>