

Interested Party Testimony on Senate Bill 153

Failure to Utilize Federal Resources to Verify Voter Eligibility

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear, and members of the Committee:

I appreciate the chance to offer interested party testimony on SB153 and the legislature's efforts to improve the integrity of Ohio's elections, particularly in ensuring that only eligible U.S. citizens are registered to vote.

Currently, only individuals with Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) records are screened and the Department of Homeland Security's Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) program is used to confirm the status of noncitizens with BMV records. This limited process fails to cover a significant number of both new and existing voters who lack BMV records, leaving a substantial gap in verification.

This represents a missed opportunity to use comprehensive and already-available federal resources to verify voter eligibility. President Trump's Executive Order 14248 explicitly directs the Commissioner of Social Security, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the Secretary of State to make all relevant federal databases available to state and local election officials for the purpose of verifying citizenship and voter eligibility.

To address this shortfall, I respectfully urge the Committee to amend SB153 to require the use of all relevant databases to verify both new voter registration applicants and existing registrants. This should include the Ohio BMV database, the Social Security Administration (SSA), and other applicable federal and state records. This approach enhances election security by using authoritative data sources and ensures that all registrants are held to the same verification standard, regardless of their registration method or BMV record status. It also aligns with the President's Executive Order, reduces reliance on paper documentation, eases the administrative burden on election officials, and strengthens compliance with both federal and state laws.

By fully utilizing all available federal and state data, Ohio can close existing verification gaps and better protect the integrity of its elections. I encourage the Committee to consider this amendment as an essential step toward that goal.

Thank you again for your leadership and commitment to election integrity.

Respectfully,

Donna Cecil
Hamilton County