

Senate Bill 153 Interested Party Testimony

Falls Short of Secretary LaRose's Recommendations on Citizenship and Voter ID Verification

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

I appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 153 as an interested party concerning voter registration procedures.

As a previous poll worker, I was aware and had read the SoS directive 2024-09 in June 2024 <https://www.ohiosos.gov/globalassets/elections/directives/2024/directive-2024-09-november-readiness-election-administration.pdf> that specifically required poll workers to be trained on the identification of non-citizen photo ID's presented. We had already conducted 3 elections without that training.

This issue is important to me as I believe, because I questioned my Board of Elections training (or lack of) on non-citizen identification for the 2024 election, there began a process to eliminate me from working the polls that year. Intimidation tactics were used and I was left feeling disenfranchised.

In an August 2024 press release and letter, Secretary of State LaRose urged legislative leaders to take three critical steps to improve election integrity: (1) Enforce Ohio's citizenship requirement by verifying U.S. citizenship **before** adding voters to the rolls, (2) Improve Ohio voter roll accuracy by placing voters in provisional voting status if their registration cannot be verified through BMV or SSA records, and (3) Address ballot drop box issues.

The following describes how SB153 fails to meet Secretary LaRose's first two requests:

#1 No Citizenship Verification Before Registration: SB153 does not attempt to require verification of citizenship **before** registration. This omission places Ohio out of compliance with the National Voter Registration Act's requirement to maintain "accurate and current" voter rolls.

Key Issues in SB153:

- Driver's License or State ID (DL/ID) Registrants: Over 305,000 noncitizens in Ohio hold valid DL/IDs and are automatically registered to vote unless they opt out, per federal law. SB153 defers citizen verification to a post-registration review by the Secretary of State – a slow, opaque process involving repeated communication with local Boards of Elections and registrant proof of citizenship document requests. This risks misidentifying noncitizens as eligible voters.
- Last Four Digits of Social Security Number (SSN4) Registrants: In 2024 alone, 62,000 voters registered using SSN4, with over 900,000 such registrations since 2010. SB153 does not require verification against Social Security Administration (SSA) citizenship data, despite a federal directive making this information available. As a result, eligible citizens face unnecessary burdens to present proof of citizenship documents to vote, while election officials and poll workers must "verify" such documents by visual inspection alone. This inefficient and error-prone process risks misidentifying noncitizens as eligible voters.
- Unverifiable ID or No ID Registrants: Individuals registered with unverifiable DL/ID or SSN4 data, or no ID at all, as permitted by federal law - cannot be cross-checked for identity or citizenship verification through BMV records. SB153 does not require these individuals to be verified against relevant federal databases. Instead, "verification" relies solely on visual inspection of citizenship documents, increasing the risk of misidentifying noncitizens as eligible voters.

In summary, SB153 allows individuals to be registered without verifying citizenship, undermining voter confidence and failing to uphold the integrity of Ohio's elections.

#2 Unverified or Mismatched Information on the Voter Rolls: 39,000 voters registered with unverifiable SSN4 or mismatched information in 2024 alone. Additionally, Secretary LaRose acknowledged 'numerous' registrations with data that does not match BMV or SSA records. Despite these discrepancies, such voters can cast absentee ballots using the same unverified data.

Key Issues in SB153:

- The bill continues to verify identity only **after** registration, rather than before registration.
- The bill places **new** voters with unverifiable or mismatched data in provisional voting status, but not existing voters with the same issues. Only existing voters who change their name or address are subject to provisional voting status.

This creates a double standard: one voter with unverifiable information is required to vote provisionally, while another with the same issue is not. This unequal treatment violates principles of equal protection under the US Constitution and allows tens of thousands of potentially ineligible voters to vote regular ballots – contrary to the Secretary's recommendations.

I respectfully request the following amendments to SB153:

- Require verification of US citizenship and eligibility **before** registration.
- Verify **all** existing registrations against BMV and SSA records. Any registration that cannot be verified must be placed in provisional status until the discrepancy is resolved.

Ensuring that only eligible citizens vote in Ohio elections is essential to upholding public trust. Verifying citizenship and valid ID at the time of registration – and not after – is a common-sense step toward stronger election integrity.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. I urge the committee to adopt these amendments to ensure transparency, fairness and confidence in Ohio's elections.

Sincerely,



Sue Lindeman
Knox County