



TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF SB 153

Presented to
Senate General Government Committee

For May 27, 2025, Hearing

Beauregard William Patterson, *on behalf of*
Fair Elections Center

To Chair Kristina Roegner; Vice Chair Theresa Gavarone; Ranking Member Willis Blackshear, Jr.; and Committee Members William DeMora, Stephen Huffman, Bill Reineke, and Jane Timken:

Thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony on behalf of Fair Elections Center regarding SB 153. The documentary proof of citizenship (DPOC) requirements proposed in SB 153 create an arduous process for verifying citizenship that will certainly prevent tens of thousands of eligible Ohioans from casting a ballot and will shut down most community-based voter registration efforts—activities which help voters at shopping centers, churches, campuses, and other public places where even people who possess documents at home do not have them on hand.

As an organization that has litigated against documentary proof of citizenship requirements, we have seen that costly and hard-to-get documents hinder eligible citizens from voting and ultimately create more problems than are solved.

For example, when Kansas and Arizona implemented similar documentary proof requirements, they blocked tens of thousands of eligible American citizens from registering. Before Kansas’s documentary proof of citizenship policy was enjoined by the courts as an undue burden on the right to vote, the extensive litigation showed that 12% of eligible Kansas voters had been directly disenfranchised by its requirements.¹ In the words of Kansas Secretary of State Scott Schwab (Republican), who originally championed the implementation of DPOC in Kansas, “Kansas did that 10 years ago,” and “It didn’t work out so well.”²

Recent studies show that nearly ten percent of voting-eligible citizens—over twenty million Americans—cannot readily access documents to prove their citizenship.³ Requiring costly and hard-to-get documents to register makes it harder for citizens to vote.⁴ Those citizens are disproportionately likely to be the young and elderly, but include Americans across all political parties and demographic groups. Married women, who have been subject to a name change, are particularly impacted as well.

¹ John Hanna, *Kansas once required voters to prove citizenship. That didn’t work out so well*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Dec. 29, 2024), accessible at <https://apnews.com/article/kansas-noncitizen-voting-proof-of-citizenship-50d56a0b8d1f0fde15480aab3db67f4f>.

² *Id.*

³ Jillian Andres Rothschild et al., *Who Lacks ID in America Today? An Exploration of Voter ID Access, Barriers, and Knowledge*, UNIV. OF MD. CTR. FOR DEMOCRACY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT (Jan. 2024), accessible at <https://fairelectionscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Voter-ID-survey-Key-Results-June-2024-1.pdf>.

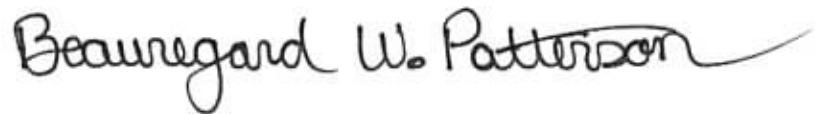
⁴ Most people would have to go to an election office or mail a document weeks before they go to vote because voters in most states must register ahead of time. These paperwork requirements would shut down online voter registration and make mail registration much harder, because even when people have the documents they need, they often can’t easily make and send in copies. Both privacy concerns and figuring out how to submit the documents make it less likely that people will finish registering.

Both federal and Ohio state law already require voter registration applicants to attest to their citizenship under penalty of perjury and provide for criminal penalties for anyone that does register despite being a non-citizen.⁵ SB 153 would not only create requirements that are redundant, but result in new administrative burdens for already overworked elections workers.

SB 153 will have a damaging impact on tens of thousands of eligible Ohio voters, including the constituents of this committee's membership. Therefore, on behalf of Fair Elections Center, I respectfully urge this committee to reconsider SB 153 and remove the proposed citizenship verification procedures.

Thank you for your consideration of the views of Fair Elections Center.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beauregard W. Patterson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Beauregard William Patterson
Counsel
Fair Elections Center

⁵ 18 U.S.C. § 611; *See* Ohio Voter Registration Form accessible at https://www.ohiosos.gov/globalassets/elections/forms/vr_form_english.pdf