

Testimony to the Ohio Senate General Government Committee Regarding Senate Bill 153

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear and members of the Senate General Government Committee

My name is Jay Zenitsky and I have been a registered voter in Ohio for more than 50 years. Over the past several election cycles, I've witnessed a steady erosion of our voting rights through increasingly restrictive laws. Among these are some of the toughest voter ID requirements in the country, reduced early voting periods, new affidavit requirements for ballot drop-offs, and a mandate limiting drop boxes to just one per county. Each of these measures has made it harder—not easier—for Ohioans to exercise their right to vote.

These changes are not, as some claim, about protecting against voter fraud. That claim simply doesn't hold up. Credible evidence shows that voter fraud in Ohio is exceedingly rare. Instead, these policies seem designed to make the process more burdensome.

Senate Bill 153 takes this trend even further. It would require proof of citizenship to register to vote, preventing many eligible citizens from registering online and forcing them to appear in person at a BMV or board of elections office. It would eliminate drop boxes altogether and impose a rigid requirement that voter registration details match BMV records exactly—including minor discrepancies like a missing middle initial. This would disproportionately affect many Ohioans, especially married women who have changed their names and others whose documents don't perfectly align.

In addition, Senate Bill 153 and its companion, House Bill 253, would impose new restrictions on volunteers gathering signatures for ballot initiatives, making it harder for Ohio citizens' voices to be heard.

Moreover, the administrative burden this bill would place on our already stretched local boards of elections is substantial and unnecessary. As you know—and as the record confirms—Ohio's elections are safe and secure. Our system has multiple safeguards and checks in place. If there is credible evidence that large numbers of non-citizens are voting in our elections, I have not seen any. That raises a fundamental question: Is Senate Bill 153 a solution in search of a problem?

I urge you to reconsider this legislation. Rather than placing more obstacles in the path of voters, we should be working to make participation in our democracy more accessible to all eligible Ohioans.