

May 25, 2025 for May 27, 2025 hearing

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

Thank you for considering my testimony below. My name is Lynn Buffington. I am retired and have lived in Greene County for more than 24 years. My husband is not yet retired and we have two grown children and one grandchild.

I urge you to reject SB 153 and its companion bill in the House, HB 233. This bill contains many provisions that are very troubling. These kinds of proposals sadden me because they are the kind of anti-voter, anti-democratic proposals that cause our two adult children to say they will not consider moving back to Ohio.

Of great concern to me is that the bill, for no good reasons, will make it harder for eligible Ohioans to register to vote and make it harder for registered voters to actually vote. Regarding the bill's requirement for documentation of U.S. citizenship for voter registration: as you may know, when Kansas tried this, they had to end it because 12% of eligible voters who tried to register were unable to provide the documentation, usually because they could not obtain an acceptable copy of their birth certificates. Many were veterans, born on military bases that have since been closed. This requirement would cause real problems for thousands of Ohioans when it has been shown that the number of non-citizens who try to register to vote is miniscule.

The elimination of drop boxes will make it harder for people to vote, - people whose work, caregiving, disability, or transportation situations make it difficult for them to vote in person or get to the post office to safely mail in ballots.

The punitive provisions regarding provisional voting are offensive. The bill would require removal of a voter from the voter rolls if they vote provisionally and then fail to go to the board of elections to provide the necessary follow-up. There are several reasons a voter might follow-up, none of which merit punishment. Not only is this provision offensive, but it would discourage people from voting provisionally, thereby disenfranchising voters.

The bill would also harm the rights of Ohio citizens to petition to pass a bill, overturn a bill, or initiate an amendment to the constitution. It would cause more petition signatures to be unnecessarily invalidated. It would threaten petition circulators with prosecution.

The harmful provisions of this bill far outweigh the tiny benefits.

Please reject this bill.

Thank you.