

4/30/2025

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

My name is Garrett Westhoven and I am resident of Geauga County. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am writing to express my opposition to SB 153. This massive bill is unnecessary and deeply harmful.

Our elections in Ohio are not broken, and there is no need to massively overhaul how we do things.

First, the citizen petition process is already (reasonably) challenging. Collecting signatures from all over the state of Ohio is not a trivial task. Attacking those people collecting signatures is antithetical to our democracy, removes a system of checks on politicians that the people deserve.

Second, this bill makes it harder to cast a ballot. When something like this was tried in Kansas, 12% of eligible voters were unable to register. This particularly impacts poor, elderly, and women who changed their name when they were married. Furthermore, requiring hyper specific data cross referencing creates an undue burden for both voters and the administrators. People are required on certain documents to have a middle name or middle initial, and then drop it on others. This data inconsistency is everywhere and forcing people to vote provisionally because of this could cause thousands of otherwise legit votes to be tossed for no good reason.

Finally, this bill greatly increases the administrative tasks of local boards of elections, but does not provide any funding for the manpower necessary to execute these tasks. This will require counties to increase property taxes in order to hire the necessary people to carry out these tasks. This will be required on top of a property tax increase that is happening across our state this is anywhere from 20 to 40% depending upon where you live.

Making election administration of elections unnecessarily harder, and increasing taxes is double whammy of absurdity that this elective body should stop debating and focus on real issues like the aforementioned property tax increases.

The legislature should not rush such a significant and dangerous bill, especially during our primary election season when election officials have not even had time to weigh in. Please vote no on SB 153.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

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