

Interested Party Testimony for Senate Bill 153

Fails to Align with President Trump's Executive Order 14248

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

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony regarding Senate Bill 153 (SB153). I am participating as an interested party who supports efforts to strengthen the integrity of our elections, while also calling for improvements to ensure Ohio elections are accurate, secure and in alignment with federal guidelines.

SB153 proposes changes to Ohio's voter registration system. However, it currently falls short in several critical areas when compared to Executive Order 14248 (EO), titled "*Preserving and Protecting the Integrity of American Elections*," issued by President Donald J. Trump in March, 2025. These gaps risk undermining the integrity of Ohio's voter rolls and public confidence in the electoral process.

Key Areas of Concern

1. **Lack of Required Documentary Proof of Citizenship (DPOC):**
EO requires documentary proof of citizenship for all voter registrations; **SB153** does not.
2. **No Tracking or Recordkeeping Requirement for DPOC:**
EO requires tracking of the type of DPOC and related information; **SB153** does not.
3. **Acceptance of Expired Driver's Licenses and State IDs:**
EO does not include the use of expired driver's licenses or state IDs as DPOC;
SB153 allows.
4. **Acceptance of Out-of-State Licenses:**
EO does not include the use of out-of-state driver's licenses as DPOC;
SB153 allows.
5. **Limited Access to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Database Systems:**
EO requires DHS to make systems available to state and local election officials for citizenship verification;
SB153 does not codify local-level access to DHS systems, and limits state-level access to the DHS SAVE program – only for confirming noncitizen status of individuals flagged through BMV records.
6. **No Access to Social Security Administration (SSA) Databases:**
EO requires SSA to make relevant databases available to state and local election officials for eligibility verification;
SB153 does not codify state or local level access to these databases.
7. **No Access to Secretary of State Databases:**
EO requires the Secretary of State to make relevant databases available to state and local election officials for citizenship verification;
SB153 does not codify state or local access to these databases.

To address these Key Areas of Concern, an amendment is necessary to bring SB153 into alignment with President Trump's federal Executive Order 14248, including:

1. Require DPOC access for all new and existing voter registrations:

For any individual whose US citizenship cannot be verified through an official federal or state database, DPOC must be submitted, or a hearing requested with the submission of alternative proof of citizenship evidence.

If a copy of DPOC is provided, it must be verified by Boards of Elections officials to an official federal or state database, with a tracking and recordkeeping process.

If an original or official copy of DPOC is submitted, it must be verified by a properly trained Board of Election official with a tracking and recordkeeping process.

For new registrations, the applicant must be placed in a "pending file" until the applicant meets all all eligibility verifications. For existing registrations, the registrant must be placed in provisional ballot status until the registrant meets all eligibility verifications.

2. Prohibit Expired or Out-of-State IDs as DPOC:

Expired or out-of-state driver's licenses shall not be accepted as proof of citizenship.

3. Codify Full Access to Federal and State Verification Systems:

Grant state and county Boards of Elections officials full access to all relevant federal and state databases necessary to verify the eligibility and citizenship of new applicants and existing registrants. This includes, but is not limited to, databases and systems maintained by the DHS, SSA and Secretary of State.

Ensuring that only eligible U.S. citizens are registered to vote is a constitutional obligation. While SB153 takes initial steps, it must be strengthened to meet the expectations of Ohio voters after overwhelmingly passing the amendment to Ohio's Constitution to ensure "only" Ohio citizens vote in Ohio elections over two years ago. Additionally, SB153 must align with established federal law and guidance. By adopting the proposed amendment, the General Assembly can close these gaps and enhance voter confidence across the state.

Thank you for your time, attention, and service.

Respectfully submitted,

Eileen Watts

Delaware County