

Testimony on Senate Bill 153
Ohio Senate General Government Committee
James Rigano, Springboro, OH
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Chairwoman Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear, and Members of the General Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 153. My name is Jim Rigano. I am a Springboro, Ohio resident, engineer, and data analyst. Since 2021, I have analyzed Ohio's public voter rolls from the Secretary of State and county boards of elections. As public concern over election integrity grows, SB153 is a vital step, but my findings reveal gaps that must be addressed to ensure trust in our elections.

I commend SB153's efforts to validate voter eligibility and its attempt to prevent duplicate registrations. These are two of my primary concerns about our voter rolls. However, I am concerned the General Assembly may view SB 153 as sufficient and want to encourage you to do more.

Data analysts refer to a concept called "data validation." Data validation is the process of verifying that data is correct and that it is properly entered into a database. Ideally, this is done as the data is entered, but the data can also be screened for problems that need correction after it is entered. Ohio's voter registration databases lack this safeguard, allowing many data entry errors in names, addresses, birthdates, etc., often caused by bad handwriting, to go undetected.

My analysis reveals other systemic problems too, including:

- 962,000 inactive registrants who have not voted in six years, violating Article V, Section 1 of the Ohio Constitution's four-year cancellation rule.
- 3,435 confirmed and up to 14,000 potential duplicate registrations on the voter rolls today, risking double voting.
- 1,015 registrants matching Ohio Department of Health death records.
- 391 voters aged 105 or older indicating incorrect birth dates or deceased persons that should have been removed, like James B Miller who is allegedly 125 years old.
- 190,000 registrations on holidays when boards are closed.
- 255 registrations at invalid addresses, like post offices or The UPS Store.

Data validation that would minimize, or eliminate, these issues should not be cumbersome. It happens in the commercial world every time we do an online transaction. It can happen for voter registration also.

Madam Chair, our county boards of elections do an excellent job of running elections, but they are not computer experts or professional database administrators. Nor should they be. They need help in the form of computer software to perform this validation for them. Ohio has an abundance of data about its citizens and its non-citizens. The State knows my full name, my address, my birth date, my weight, even my eye color. The boards need software to leverage the relevant information, assure proper data entry, and screen for duplicates and eligibility. Please amend SB153 to require robust data validation before the 2026 general election.

SB 153 will improve the quality of the statewide voter registration database. But if you don't demand that counties use the statewide database, it may not have any real impact on elections. In addition to the statewide voter registration database, each county also has a voter database. When I questioned all 88 counties about which database they use to obtain the official list of electors for an election, every county that replied told me they use their own county database to make the list. This is contrary to both Ohio and federal law that require the statewide voter registration database to be the official source for all elections. If the databases were in sync, this would be a technicality. However, some of our largest counties are considerably out of alignment with the statewide database. For example, Hamilton County and the state disagree on whether 1,001 voters exist, Cuyahoga and the state: 8,555 voters, Franklin and the state: 7 voters. These examples are just where there is disagreement about whether the voters' registration record exists. There are also disagreements about the voter's names, addresses, and other data elements.

This bill should also replace the current audit of the statewide voter registration database promulgated in ORC 3503.15 and OAC 111:3-4-5 which is missing scores of problems. The General Assembly should require the Auditor of State to conduct an annual audit of the statewide voter registration database and three counties selected at random. The Auditor should look for the common problems that citizens are finding today and assure that the voter rolls comply with SOS directives and state law.

I have attached suggested legislation for an audit of voter registration databases to my written testimony. And, I can provide the committee with reports I have written about the condition of Ohio's voter rolls if that would be helpful. Thank you, and I'm happy to answer questions.

James Rigano

Attachment 1 - Draft legislation for audit of voter rolls by the Auditor of State

Note: references to section numbers may need to be modified to conform with current law.

Sec. 3503.XXX

(A) Each year, the auditor of state shall conduct an audit of the statewide voter registration database and of three counties' voter registration systems.

(B)(1) The county voter registration systems to be audited in a given year shall be randomly selected based on each county's number of registered electors, as follows:

- (a) One county from the counties representing the top third of all registered electors;
- (b) One county from the counties representing the middle third of all registered electors;
- (c) One county from the counties representing the lowest third of all registered electors.

(2) A county that is audited under division (B)(1) of this section shall not be audited under that division again until every other county in the county's category has been audited the same number of times. This division does not apply to any additional audits conducted under division (D) of this section.

(C) Each audit of the statewide voter registration database or a county voter registration system shall include evaluations of the degree to which each of the following are true:

- (1) Electors' names and addresses are entered in a format that conforms with the requirements of this chapter and of directives issued by the secretary of state.
- (2) Electors' names, addresses, and dates of birth are consistent with the corresponding voter registration applications and update forms and with the records of the bureau of motor vehicles.
- (3) Electors are not registered at residence addresses that are not suitable for use as residence addresses.
- (4) Electors' voter registration dates are accurate, as described in division (C)(9) of section 3503.15 of the Revised Code.
- (5) Electors' dates of birth indicate that they are eligible to vote, are logically consistent with the electors' voter registration dates and voting history dates and are not older than the oldest known United States citizen.
- (6) Electors' registration records are consistent as shown in the statewide voter registration database and the applicable county's voter registration system, and the same electors

appear in the statewide voter registration database and in the applicable county's voter registration system.

(7) Duplicate records are not present in the database being audited.

(8) Electors who are registered at the same address are not assigned to different precincts or voting districts.

(9) The secretary of state or the board of elections, as applicable, complies with the database maintenance procedures described in sections 3503.15 to 3503.153, 3503.201, and 3503.21 of the Revised Code.

(D) In addition to the annual audits conducted under this section, upon the request of the secretary of state or the appropriate board of elections, the auditor of state shall conduct an additional audit of a county's voter registration system for the entire county or for a particular precinct or precincts.

(E) The report, findings, and recommendations for each audit conducted under this section shall be made available to the public on the official web sites of the auditor of state and the secretary of state.