

Testimony by Maxine C. Irvin
Before the Senate General Government Committee on Senate Bill 153
October 27, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear and members of the Senate General Government Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide opposition testimony on Senate Bill 153.

My name is Maxine Irvin. I am a lifelong resident of Ohio, and I am here to voice strong opposition to Senate Bill 153.

Senate Bill 153 is not about ensuring election and petitioning integrity. It is the opposite. It is a direct attack on our rights as US citizens to vote in elections and petition our government as is our constitutional right. It will deliberately disenfranchise voters, and for some US citizens, make it impossible to register to vote. Petitioning requirements are already extensive, and the updates in Senate Bill 153 will make it nearly impossible to get any citizen initiative on the ballot.

During 2016, my daughter turned eighteen, registered to vote and was excited to vote for the first time in a presidential election. On election day, my daughter and I took time out of our busy schedules to do our civic duty as good U.S. citizens and went to vote. We grabbed our ID's, drove to our polling location, and stood in long lines cast our ballots. At 18 years of age, my daughter did not have a driver's license, but she did have a U.S. Passport. However, her passport was not sufficient ID. She needed a bill in her name with her address listed. We could go home, find a bill, wait in line again, or she could file a provisional ballot. If she filed a provisional ballot, we would have to go to the board of elections in the next few days to provide proof of her address. I was working full time, and she was a busy college student. Neither of us had time to wait in line again to present proof that she lived at the residence she had lived at her whole life! We also knew that most provisional ballots are disqualified and never counted!

So here was a natural born American Citizen with a passport who was denied her right to vote because of arbitrary laws. Instead of protecting our election integrity, it is deliberately denying US citizens, such as my daughter, the right to vote! And why? Because she did not have a driver's license, and a US Passport was not valid proof that she was who she said she was. There was no legitimate reason for my daughter to have been denied her right to vote!

And now, this bill adds more hurdles to register to vote or to update our registration specifically for women who marry and change their last name to their husband's last name. It is estimated that 80% of women change their name when they get married. And now women must provide proof of their name change! In the past women had to fight to keep their maiden name as their legal name when they got married. There were places where legally women had to change their surname when they married. It was frowned upon if women did not change their surname to their husband's name. I am sure that those who support this bill are aware that women traditionally were expected to assume their husband's last name, and that is why this requirement was added to this bill. It is a deliberate attack to deny women the right to vote, and not about election integrity at all. And because of Bills like this one, women today are being advised not to change their last name to their husband's name when they get married.

This bill does not stop at just mandating voter suppression, it also attacks the right to petition our government by adding requirements that will deliberately nullify the wishes of "We the People." I am an experienced volunteer signature gatherer. So many things have been added to Senate Bill 153, it would be humorous if it were not so outrageous.

For example, a signature gatherer is considered a paid petitioner if they receive: (1) All money or things of value paid, given, promised, or received for circulating the petitions; Lines 5460 – 5461. What is considered a thing a value that would turn a volunteer signature gatherer into a paid signature gatherer? Is it a slice of pizza? Is it a T-Shirt? What about a bottle of water to stay hydrated? Is it a 12-cent pen that the gatherer was given to collect signatures and keeps after the petition drive is completed? None of these things of value offset the amount of expense a volunteer signature gatherer has invested in obtaining the petitions, travelling to events, spending the time collecting signatures, and delivering completed petitions. And yet, the way this bill is written, the signature gatherer's petitions could be discarded if any of this occur and they do not declare themselves to be a paid signature gatherer before they gather their first signature and they must wear the required designation.

Also, if the signature gatherer makes an error on the form, the whole part-petition could be discarded. People are human and everyone makes errors. What if the Petition Gatherer writes that thirty-five people signed the petition, and it was later discovered that one of the signers made an error and that signer was disqualified? Thus, there were only thirty-four acceptable signatures. Does that invalidate the entire part-petition? Or if the signature gatherer first writes that there were thirty-five signatures and later realizes that one of the signatures had an error, crosses off thirty-five and changes it to thirty-four. Does that invalidate the entire Part-Petition?

This bill also changes the date of voter registration from the date when the completed petition is submitted to the date when the signer signed the petition. People sign part-petitions on different dates. It makes no sense to have to access multiple daily downloads of voter rolls to verify signatures. It will make it extremely cumbersome to verify signatures on petitions where you might have to access 35 databases to verify one part-petition.

This country was founded on “We the People.” Senate Bill 153 ignores that and instead is about voter suppression and denying our ability to petition the government. Our elections are safe. Illegals do not vote. Under current law, it takes a massive effort by many people to even get a citizen’s initiative on the ballot.

Senate Bill 153 must be rejected. It is a discriminatory bill against married women and others who change their names. This bill protects nothing and instead is denying us the right to vote and makes it more difficult to register to vote and to petition the government. The Government works for “We the People.” And it is our right and our responsibility to notify our elected officials when their actions are not representing the people who elected them to office such as when they introduce such harmful bills as Senate Bill 153.

Senate Bill 153 must be rejected.

Thank you,

Maxine C. Irvin