

SB 293 written testimony
by Debra Shankland

I have voted in most elections since my early 20's. I have seen many changes in voter registration and Election Day procedures. However, in the past ten years, most changes have been making it harder to vote for no apparent reason, or for seemingly dumb reasons. New procedures, rules and forms have been instituted, repealed and reinstated. This results in confusion, wasted taxpayer funds, and a general lack of confidence in the system. Note that this is caused by our legislature, not fraudulent voting.

For example, August elections were eliminated, only to be immediately reinstated by the Secretary of State. Or maybe it was just the one August election? A ridiculously strict photo ID law has been instituted. Early voting has been curtailed, ballot drop boxes have been nearly eliminated, and the 10-day grace period for the acceptance of mailed-in ballots legally postmarked by the Monday before Election Day has been reduced from 10 days to just 4.

Now comes SB 293, which would eliminate Ohio's 4-day grace period for absentee ballots that were MAILED ON TIME and postmarked by the Monday preceding Election Day altogether. Why? Is the postal service suddenly as reliable as it was prior to 2016?

Nearly a third of the Ohio voters who voted early in 2024 used the USPS to return their absentee ballots. More than 9500 of those mail-in ballots were received at the Boards of Elections during the 4-day post-election acceptance window. SB 293 would have all those ballots thrown out.

SB 293 has nothing to do with election security, and everything to do with disenfranchising voters, particularly the elderly, people with disabilities, election workers, and busy college students, who all tend to use Vote-by-Mail. I vote absentee because I am a PEO; I drive to the Board of Elections to place my completed ballot in our county's only drop box. I'm able to do that because thank God I have the ability to drive, a reliable car, and as a retiree, my schedule is flexible. I consider myself lucky! Why would you want to disenfranchise law-abiding Ohioans whose ballots are delayed by the post office, through no fault of their own? Because they are too poor or physically unable to drive to the Board of Elections?

Every single valid vote cast by every eligible citizen must be counted. Anything less is fraud against the electorate. Please reject the unnecessary SB 293 to maintain some accessibility and fairness in Ohio elections.

Thank you.

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