

S.B. 14

Written Proponent Testimony

Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Valoria C. Hoover, Attorney, Board Member, Co-Chair of the Selection Committee and Class of 2008 Graduate of the Jo Ann Davidson Ohio Leadership Institute

Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Weinstein and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 14, which seeks to designate September 28th Speaker Jo Ann Davidson Day in the State of Ohio. This legislation is an appropriate and fitting honor for Speaker Davidson, an Ohio legend in the political arena, a trailblazer, a leader, a role model, my friend, and a deeply devoted public servant.

While I first met Speaker Davidson in 1994, she was elected Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives and I had been an attorney for about 2 years. Meeting the first woman Speaker of the House was a daunting and intimidating experience, yet her ability to meet people where they were, cut through my uneasiness. Speaker Davidson embodied grace yet was tough, brilliant, clever, competitive, and fun loving. Her integrity and strength for public service was unwavering.

Over the 30 years that I had the privilege to know her, I witnessed her many ways of contributing to Ohio and the Nation's fabric. Speaker Davidson's contributions as Speaker of the House are enshrined in the legislation she championed and the way she wielded the gavel. Her contribution of running the House with openness, fairness and spirited debate is well documented. Yet it is in what the Speaker did after she retired from the House that inspired me.

After serving as Speaker, Jo Ann created the Jo Ann Davidson Ohio Leadership Institute, an eight-month program to encourage and train women in leadership to assume prominent roles in elected or appointed government. I was honored to participate in the Class of 2008. Additionally, I held a position on the Board of the Institute for over 15 years and was the cochair of the Selection Committee for about a decade, among sitting on other committees periodically. The Committee selected those who would be offered a seat in the upcoming class. As co-chair of the Selection Committee, I saw Speaker Davidson's desire, dedication, and determination to instill in those women selected the spark, confidence, and skill to make a difference through each of their modes of leadership. The Speaker took every opportunity to make others take a risk and become more than what they even knew they were capable of.

In 2010, I became the President of the Ohio Women's Bar Association and the Ohio Women's Bar Foundation. As it has been said imitation is the best form of flattery, as President of the Ohio Women's Bar Foundation, I was inspired in part from Speaker Davidson and was the founder of the Ohio Women's Bar Foundation Leadership Institute. I took what Speaker Davidson had shown me the vision, the passion, the courage to take a risk and the desire to make a difference and applied it to my profession. Today, the Ohio Women's Bar Foundation Leadership Institute is in its 13th year and has nearly 200 graduates. And like the over 400 women who have graduated from the Jo Ann Davidson Ohio Leadership Institute, the OWBF Leadership Institute graduates are making a difference in their communities, their profession and the fabric of Ohio and this Nation.

Establishing Speaker Jo Ann Davidson Day on September 28th would be a fitting tribute to Speaker Davidson's unquestionable legacy and serve as enduring reminder of the ripples that her life created to lift all, including women, to service to our communities. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak on the remarkable, extraordinary, and inspirational life of Speaker Jo Ann Davidson. I respectfully urge the support for this bill.

Very truly,

Valoria Hoover