



Americans for Prosperity – OH Proponent Testimony, HB 309 – Senate Local Government Committee – 10.29.2025

Chair O'Brien, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Senate Local Government Committee.

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 309. My name is Donovan O'Neil and I'm the State Director for Americans for Prosperity – Ohio.

Substitute House Bill 309 represents a significant step toward ensuring Ohio's property tax system is fair, transparent, and accountable. Further, it strongly aligns with AFP's preferred approaches to property tax reform, including

1. Broad-base, low rates
2. Elimination of special interest carve-outs
3. Predictable and permanent reforms
4. Transparency and accountability

Broad-Based, Low-Rate Taxes

We support a property tax system that is broad-based and features low rates. Such an approach minimizes economic distortion and ensures that all property owners contribute equitably to the funding of essential local services. By casting a wide net and keeping rates reasonable, the system maintains stability and fairness across the community.

Budget commissions must now justify levies and consider alternative funding sources, introducing discipline to property tax growth and helping to expose wasteful spending. These steps help ensure that property tax collections are used efficiently and for their intended public purposes, supporting a level playing field for all taxpayers.

Opposition to Special Interest Carve-Outs

Special interest carve-outs, exemptions, and deductions undermine the integrity of the tax system by creating a two-tiered structure. We oppose these practices, as they compromise fairness and equality. All property owners should be subject to the same rules and obligations under the law, ensuring equal treatment for all.

Predictable and Permanent Reforms

Tax reforms should offer certainty and predictability for taxpayers. Temporary tax changes can create confusion and instability. The bill maintains safeguards to ensure that school districts do not fall below essential funding levels, striking a balance between protecting taxpayers and supporting quality public education.

A mechanism is established for the Tax Commissioner to annually adjust the rate of qualifying fixed-sum levies. This ensures these levies generate only the intended amount of revenue, preventing windfalls or shortfalls and supporting the principle of revenue-neutral millage rates.

Transparency and Accountability

Tax policies must be transparent and straightforward. Taxpayers have the right to clearly understand their obligations and how their tax dollars are being utilized.

The bill amends sections of the Revised Code to clarify and strengthen the responsibilities of county budget commissions. These commissions are empowered to review tax budgets, projections, and levies, and to reduce levies that lead to unnecessary or excessive collections. This provision helps prevent over-taxation and supports disciplined growth in property taxes.

The bill requires that, before any reduction in a tax levy, public hearings are held. Taxing authorities are given a platform to present relevant information, and the public is given an opportunity to participate—aligning with recommendations for mailed notifications, public websites, and citizen input on proposed tax changes.

The bill emphasizes transparency, regular public hearings, and clear definitions of tax needs, empowering property owners to hold local officials accountable. While not requiring direct voter approval for every increase, it lays essential groundwork for informed public participation and oversight.

By mandating that commissions consider current fund balances, projected expenditures, and other funding sources, the bill ensures that property tax collections are justified by actual needs rather than arbitrary increases. This transparency provides taxpayers with clarity regarding the necessity and rationale behind proposed tax changes.

Substitute House Bill 309 is a thoughtful and responsible reform that brings Ohio's property tax system closer to the ideals of transparency, accountability, and taxpayer protection. By modernizing budget commission procedures, clarifying levy requirements, and increasing public oversight, this bill will help ensure that property taxes are fair, predictable, and used wisely. I urge the committee to support Sub. H.B. 309 and continue advancing property tax reforms that empower Ohio's citizens and strengthen our communities.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions.