

**Budget Testimony**  
**Tim Ward**  
**Ohio Association of Election Officials**  
**May 31, 2017**



Chairman Oelslager, Ranking Member Skindell and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Tim Ward and I am President of the Ohio Association of Election Officials (OAEO). I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to present testimony on HB 49, the state biennial budget.

It is in a somewhat awkward fashion that I humbly approach this committee with hat in hand to ask for your assistance in solving a problem of imminent concern to OAEO, the replacement of our aging voting equipment.

The need for new elections equipment is real. Every election more and more equipment fails, while the cost of maintaining our antiquated voting machines rises. While many of us long for the inexpensive days of punch card voting, the federal government has left us with new mandates that require us to use more costly equipment. In doing so they have left the funding of that equipment back on local governments. It is an unfortunate situation, but one that our democracy cannot afford to ignore.

OAEO is grateful to the House of Representatives for including \$1 million in seed money to reimburse counties that have already

purchased voting equipment. It is a clear and definitive step in the right direction. However, we would ask that the Senate clean up some of the language in the House version of the bill and build upon the foundation they have put forward.

First, while \$1 million in new money is certainly appreciated in this very tight budget, we believe that to adequately reimburse the dozen or so counties that have already purchased equipment, an appropriation of \$7 million is closer to the mark. Second, the House version set the reimbursement rate at up to 50% state money with the rest coming from the counties. We, along with CCAO, have consistently asked for a match closer to 85% state and 15% local as was the case with the electronic poll book program that the state helped fund in the last budget. However, an easier way to set up a program could be to simply appropriate money and reimburse counties on a per registered voter basis. This is the way we allocated federal Help America Vote Act money that we received in 2005.

Third, the House version limits DAS to contract with three voting equipment vendors. In reality, DAS has already completed their procurement process and five vendors have qualified to sell equipment in Ohio. We see no need for the legislature to arbitrarily limit competition. Finally, we would encourage the Senate to include “legislative intent” language to assure counties that the General Assembly intends to participate in a full-fledged cost sharing program, perhaps with capital dollars as opposed to GRF dollars. The House did include language to this effect and OAEO appreciates that.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.