



Chairman Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig -- thank you for allowing me to provide proponent testimony for Senate Bill 191. This bill will allow registered voters to request their absentee ballot online.

Here in Ohio, we've become a national leader in early voting. We start voting the day after the registration deadline, which for this primary season will be 27 days this Spring -- far above the national average of 19. We allow voting by mail for any reason. We're one of just 20 states that allow Saturday voting and one of just five that has voting on Sunday.

Every eligible Ohioan is able to go online to the Secretary of State's website and register to vote. But not a single one of them can request their absentee ballot online.

With Ohio's significant early voting opportunities, absentee voting has become more and more prevalent over the years. In the November 2016 presidential election, more than 1.2 million Ohioans cast their vote by mail or dropped their absentee ballot off at their local Board of Elections. Voting absentee affords each of them the time they may need to research the candidates and issues on their ballot. However, the current process in place for requesting an absentee ballot online is outdated and in need of change.

If you want to vote absentee, this is what an Ohio voter may need to do: first, they go online to request an absentee ballot application be sent to her home. Their county board of elections then puts the application in the mail and they wait for it to arrive. Once it shows up in their mailbox, they fill out the application and send it back. The Board again receives the correspondence that indicates their interest in voting by mail. Finally, the board sends the actual absentee ballot to them -- and they finally mail in a completed ballot -- wrapping up a convoluted process that may take weeks.

Ohio already has a strong, positive reputation as a state that embraces voter accessibility. But we can do so much better. Senate Bill 191 will finally allow a registered voter to utilize well-established technology to request their absentee ballot online from a secure website created and managed by the Secretary of State.

This bill will eliminate the wasteful initial step of requesting an absentee ballot application and will allow electors to directly request their ballot be sent to their home. This simple change to Ohio law will make absentee voting easier for all Ohioans.

I want to thank Senator Gavarone for her work on this very important issue. Thank you for allowing me to testify today, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.