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Proponent Testimony on House Bill 487 –
CHANGE BIDDING PROCESS FOR BALLOT PRINTING
House Government Oversight Committee
Nazek Hapasha, MPA - League of Women Voters of Ohio
February 8, 2022

Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the Government Oversight Committee: Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Nazek Hapasha. I am the Policy Affairs Manager at the League of Women Voters of Ohio. On behalf of our members in 95 Ohio House districts, I am here to testify in support of House Bill 487.

The League believes that voting is a fundamental right that must be guaranteed for all Ohio citizens. Our organization has worked for more than a century to promote the values and processes of representative government. Integral to the work of protecting the right to vote is ensuring the integrity of the processes and systems of our elections infrastructure. But, as Representative Young mentioned in his sponsor testimony, it has been almost forty years since the ballot and printing procurement statutes for Ohio's boards of elections have been updated, and HB 487 offers desperately needed updates to a changed elections and voting landscape.

We would like to specifically express our support for certain provisions of HB 487, including:

- Increasing the proposal period from 5 days to 15 days;
- Removing the requirement that ballots be printed in Ohio and that the bidder be in Ohio;
- Requiring that the contract be awarded to the most qualified responsible bidder that meets standards developed by the Secretary of State, rather than the lowest responsible bidder;
- Requiring the Secretary of State to adopt rules establishing printing, mailing, and security standards for vendors.

Voting preferences in Ohio have clearly changed with the pandemic. The number of people who prefer a mail-in ballot has increased, and we expect this preference to continue. During the last general election, current regulations regarding the printing of ballots left boards of elections with minimal options, and vendors ultimately could not meet deadlines. In several counties throughout Ohio, including Summit, Montgomery, Butler, and Lucas, voters were late to receive

their absentee ballots and/or BOEs were scrambling to print ballots after they had to terminate original vendor contracts after the start of early voting.¹

As you know, elections administration in Ohio is highly decentralized across 88 counties, who don't always have the resources they need to operate with excellence and efficiency. Where Boards of Elections must work with vendors to meet the demands of an election, it is critical that the Ohio Revised Code provide guardrails to ensure quality and security. Most recently, excellent changes have been initiated for voting equipment providers. We would like to suggest that there be similar standards for all vendors, including for those who print ballots. Specifically, we would like to see this bill go further in ensuring the quality and security provided by vendors, with an amendment that would (1) require print vendors be approved by the same board as the voting system vendors and (2) would require BOEs to choose a vendor from a list of approved vendors who meet the standards of the Secretary of State.

The League is fiercely nonpartisan in that we do not endorse candidates or parties. We are proud to have many members who are poll workers, as well as an excellent relationship with boards of elections across the state and the Ohio Association of Elections Officials. As such, we know that this bill is important to them and represents a common sense reform that will help them operate with greater effectiveness and efficiency, while lowering their costs.

In the past, a host of problems have been caused by the use of outside vendors for elections and voting purposes. But we simply cannot afford to have problems that affect the state of our democracy. We ask this Legislature to take every step possible to ensure that every Ohioan who has the right to vote is able to cast their ballot with ease and confidence. We stand ready to work with you to update other aspects of election administration such as requiring the approval of other types of vendors and modernizing voter registration systems through future legislative efforts as well.

The League of Women Voters of Ohio was formed in May 1920 out of Ohio's woman suffrage movement. The League is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League has over 4000 members and 32 local Leagues across the Buckeye State.

¹ *In Ohio, a Printing Company Is Overwhelmed and Mail Ballots Are Delayed;*
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/16/us/politics/ohio-mail-ballots-trump.html>