



## State Representative Brian Stewart

Joint-Sponsor Testimony on House Resolution 69

June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker Pro Tem, Minority Leader Sykes, and members of the Committee, I want to thank you for your time and consideration of this important resolution. It continues to be a sad fact that Representative Householder's own actions have made this resolution necessary. Representative Fraizer and I have brought it because we believe strongly in its merits, but we feel no joy in doing so, and we acknowledge that this has been a difficult issue for a number of members. However, Ohioans did not send us here just to tackle the easy questions, they sent us here to tackle the hard ones too.

House Resolution 69 is a necessary step in restoring honor, integrity, and accountability to the Ohio House of Representatives. Today, Representative Larry Householder, the immediate past Speaker of the House continues to occupy a seat in the House, collecting a taxpayer-funded salary of more than \$65,000. He is empowered to introduce and vote on legislation, all while he is under federal indictment for selling legislation as part of a \$60 million bribery, racketeering, and money laundering scheme that has been admitted to by 3 of his co-defendants. As a result of these guilty pleas, the crimes at issue here are not merely allegations anymore, they are admitted *facts*, in open court.

Along with our testimony we have submitted numerous exhibits detailing the federal indictment against Representative Householder. Very briefly summarized, the complaint and indictment (included as Exhibits A and B), backed up by an 82-page supporting affidavit, alleges that Householder was the mastermind of a bribery scheme in which he agreed to pass legislation benefiting First Energy in exchange for \$60 million. These funds were allegedly used not only to secure his own election as Speaker of the House, but to benefit himself personally in the amount of roughly \$400,000. Importantly, Jeff Longstreth, Juan Cespedes, and Generation Now – three of Householder's named co-conspirators – have already pleaded guilty to RICO Conspiracy (see Exhibits C, D, and E), specifically admitting in their plea agreements that:

“Beginning in at least 2016 and continuing through July 21, 2020, that [Jeff Longstreth, Juan Cespedes, Generation Now], along with **Larry Householder**...did knowingly and intentionally conspire with each other...to conduct and participate directly...in the conduct of the affairs of [the Householder Enterprise] through a pattern of racketeering activity...consisting of...honest services wire fraud...interference with commerce, robbery, or

extortion...racketeering...laundering of monetary  
instruments...and multiple acts involving bribery [...].

The Ohio Constitution specifically authorizes us to expel a member for “disorderly conduct” and so the remedy sought by this Resolution is unquestionably constitutional. With respect, if racketeering, money laundering, and bribery do not qualify as “disorderly conduct,” then virtually nothing ever could. Selling legislation in this honorable House, especially while serving as Speaker of the House, is most certainly “disorderly conduct.” The Ohio Constitution specifically provides for us, as members, to view and weigh the facts and evidence for ourselves, independent of any other branch of government, and determine if we believe that a member has committed “disorderly conduct” sufficient to warrant expulsion. This Resolution was introduced because we, and a great number of our colleagues, have concluded that this threshold has been met with regard to Representative Householder.

Representative Fraizer and I are proud members of a Republican caucus that very often argues that government should operate more like a business. Well, Mr. Speaker, there is not one business in all of Ohio who would keep someone employed under this same set of circumstances. If a bank teller gets caught stealing, they do not get to stay in their job handling the cash drawer while their case works through the courts. If a teacher gets caught having an inappropriate relationship with a student, they do not get to stay in the classroom while they await trial. Representative Householder is under indictment for selling legislation, and Ohioans cannot fathom how he remains in a position to continue to introduce legislation under those circumstances. Virtually everyone else associated with this scandal lost their job a long time ago. As our Exhibit G demonstrates, the current co-defendants lost their jobs, First Energy CEO Chuck Jones lost his job, numerous other First Energy executives and staff lost their jobs, and PUCO Chairman Sam Randazzo lost his job. The only person who has *kept* their job is the person under indictment for being the mastermind of the entire scheme, who also happens to be the only person collecting a paycheck from the taxpayers.

In closing, I filed this Resolution because I believe the reputation of this House is at stake. I was raised to believe that honesty, integrity, and character were essential traits for every citizen, but especially for those of us who seek to be entrusted with the responsibility of leadership as elected officials. In public service, *how* we do things matters just as much as *what* we do. Yet, we are here today attempting to clean up a mess that was caused when too many people bought into Representative Householder’s vision of “win at any cost,” “cut every corner,” and “it’s only wrong if you get caught.” Mr. Speaker, I am grateful that under your leadership, the culture of the House has greatly improved, but a cloud will continue to hang over this chamber until we vote on this Resolution and expel Representative Householder as a member. Ohioans are waiting for us to get our heads out of the sand, to speak with a clear voice, and to make clear that corruption will not be tolerated in the People’s House.

Thank-you again for your consideration, and we will try to answer any questions you may have.