



**Representative Michele Lepore-Hagan
58th House District**

Good morning Chair Cupp, Vice Chair Ginter, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Rules and Reference Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony in support of HR 70, which will remove Larry Householder from the Ohio House of Representatives.

There is no need to recount the sordid story that brings us here today. You know it. I know it. Every member of the General Assembly knows it. Millions of Ohioans know it.

We have only one issue to address: does Mr. Householder's behavior as documented in the 43-page federal indictment that lays bare what US Attorney David DeVillers described as "likely the largest bribery money laundering scheme ever perpetrated against the people of the state of Ohio," warrant the former Speaker's expulsion from the Ohio House under this provision of Article Two, Section Six of the Ohio Constitution:

Each House may punish its members for disorderly conduct and, with the concurrence of two-thirds of the members elected thereto, expel a member, but not the second time for the same cause.

The Constitution does not expressly define "disorderly conduct" or limit its meaning to the offense as described in the Ohio Revised Code. Like the Founding Fathers who included the ephemeral term "high crimes and misdemeanors" in the list of impeachable offenses for federal officials, the drafters of Ohio's Constitution trusted the members of the General Assembly to know disorderly conduct when we see it and then take appropriate action.

Reviewing the common definitions of the word "disorderly" is a helpful first step in determining if the members of the Ohio House should exercise the power granted to us by Article Two, Section Six.

Merriam Webster defines disorderly as "engaged in conduct offensive to public order."

Wiktionary offers: "Not complying with the restraints of order and law," and "Offensive to good morals and public decency."

According to the Oxford English Language Dictionary, disorderly means "involving or contributing to a breakdown of peaceful and law-abiding behavior."

Dictionary.com offers this: "contrary to public order or morality."

Whatdoesthatmean.com defines disorderly as "Lawless; disreputable."

The Collaborative International Dictionary definitions include "Offensive to good morals and public decency; notoriously offensive..."

Does masterminding a conspiracy to secure a \$1.3 billion dollar bailout for First Energy in exchange for \$60 million in dark money, some of which was diverted for personal use, then leveraging that dark money to buy seats in the Ohio House, and strong-arm legislators into voting for HB 6, while attacking our democracy by undermining the efforts to repeal the First Energy bailout, fall under the definitions of “disorderly” as I’ve listed them above? What about those activities admitted to by the co-conspirators who have already pleaded guilty? Does that fall under these definitions of “disorderly”?

Of course it does. And that is why it is totally appropriate and absolutely necessary for us to expel Mr. Householder now.

I absolutely believe the former speaker is entitled to a fair trial, as is his right under both the U.S. and Ohio Constitutions. Here in the Ohio House of Representatives, however, we’re not held to the same proof threshold as a criminal court when it comes to making a decision on whether someone should be expelled. The US attorney obviously believes he can meet that high threshold, enough to get a conviction. He’s already received guilty pleas. His confidence gives me confidence that Householder perpetrated the largest public corruption scandal in Ohio’s history. As far as I’m concerned, it looks like corruption to the FBI. It looks like corruption to the general public and it definitely looks like corruption to me.

I don’t have to be a lawyer to know that an FBI indictment makes this institution look bad. I don’t need to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that he’s guilty to know that my constituents don’t want him earning a taxpayer funded salary. Serving in the House is not a right, it is a privilege. I was elected to do the people’s work and Ohioans want us to expel him, and for good reasons. Service in this Chamber is a privilege he has clearly abused and no longer deserves. I’m listening to my fellow Ohioans in calling for his ouster.

By passing HR 70 and removing these vestiges of impropriety and criminality from the Ohio House Chamber, we are fulfilling our moral, legal, and ethical obligations to defend the Constitution, protect the integrity of the General Assembly, and serve the best interests of our constituents.

Once again Chair Cupp, Vice Chair Ginter, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Rules and Reference Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HR 70 and this critically important matter. I look forward to answering your questions on this resolution.