

To Chair Gavarone and the rest of the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee;

My name is Adam Mathews and I am writing in support of Senate Bill 80, adding partisan identifiers for candidates for the Ohio Supreme Court in the general election. I am an attorney and a city councilman in Lebanon, Ohio. I have also been a treasurer for a successful Ohio Court of Appeals judicial campaign. As a former and likely future candidate in non-partisan elections, I see the benefit for having no identifiers in certain cases. Here at the council level, where state and national politics do not often have direct bearing on how a candidate is likely to vote on bike paths and liquor licenses, voters are not assisted by having unrelated information. Further, the general election is the only election for that seat and no party has to be declared to be on the ballot.

The situation for these local non-partisan races is different in kind from that of running for the Ohio Supreme Court. The candidates appearing on the general election ballot for the Ohio Supreme Court are selected via partisan primary, having been selected through the parties and their respective voters. There is no way around saying that these candidates are partisan in a technical sense, even if each candidate will later judge disinterestedly and without conflict. As long as the candidates for the general election are selected in this way, it is most honest to have that information present for voters on the ballot. Indeed, that information is not secret and can be found from the primary election results. Therefore, any of the clearly effective reasons to have partisan identifiers for the other elected positions should similarly bind for this case.

Partisan identifiers, in addition to reflecting the reality of the candidate selection process as stated above, would also allow voters to make a more informed decision. Judicial philosophy with differing views of originalism, textualism, and constitutional interpretation has been developing to more closely map to party lines, with promotion from organizations like the American Constitution Society and the Federalist Society bringing this development to the general public.

Providing more information, not less, would help voters make informed decisions on whom to support. In the 2020 election, there was a drop off of over 900,000 votes from the presidential to the Ohio Supreme Court vote counts, indicating a lack of information may have impacted voters from being willing to cast a vote. Similarly, in 2018, there were 4,429,582 votes cast for the governor's race with a slight drop for the other statewide seats each garnering around 4.3 million votes, then a steep drop to 3,555,662 and 3,434,254 in the two Ohio Supreme Court races. Voter fatigue does not adequately explain this consistently nearly one million vote drop down the ballot.

I encourage you to support adding partisan indicators to the general election ballots to make it easier for voters to express their will and to be honest with the voters regarding the candidates being presented.

Thank you for your consideration

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