



Chairwoman Gavarone, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Maharath, and members of the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HCR 5.

In last year's election, nearly 6 million Ohioans cast a ballot shattering our state's all-time record for voter turn-out. But that wasn't all, 74 percent of registered voters cast a ballot, breaking another record. Early and absentee voting increased by 75 percent compared to 2016, and 94 percent of all absentee ballots were returned – all smashing previous state records.

All of this in the middle of a crippling global pandemic with a toxic political environment, pervasive election disinformation, widespread civil unrest and uncertainty like we've never seen. In Ohio's 218 years of statehood, it has never been more challenging to run an election than it was last year.

And yet, by every quantifiable metric, Ohio's November 2020 election was the most successful ever on record.

Credit for this remarkable feat goes beyond the hundreds of hardworking bipartisan election officials and tens of thousands of patriotic election-day poll workers, or even our efforts to adapt Ohio to 2020's challenges -- it speaks to the processes put in place throughout the years that have made Ohio elections more accessible, more secure, and more accurate than ever before - truly a national model for fair and honest elections.

Unfortunately, Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, along with a completely partisan group of their allies in Congress, want to wipe it all away with a massive power-grab called House Resolution 1. The sweeping legislation pulls power away from the state and local election officials -- instead forcing them to conduct elections as the federal government sees fit.

Article I, Section 4 of the Constitution states that "[t]he Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof," but that "the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, except as to the Places of chusing Senators." In Federalist Paper No. 59, Alexander Hamilton contended that such regulation was only necessary in "extraordinary circumstances".

I'm not sure about you, but setting records for turnout and accessibility certainly doesn't appear to qualify as an "extraordinary circumstance".

The thing is – Ohio wasn't alone in 2020. According to Pew Research, voter turnout nationwide in the 2020 election was the highest it's been since 1980, and with more data to be analyzed, possibly even longer. This doesn't make a strong case for a federal takeover.

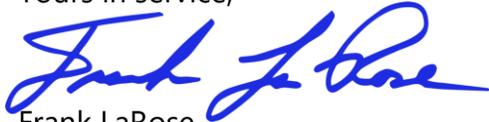
Even worse, the legislation imposes significant and costly requirements in an effort to force every state to change their voting system into the form chosen by Pelosi and Schumer. Remember, each state election system is unique – shaped by time and trusted by their respective voters. Forcing uniform standards, procedures, and expectations into state election systems, some far different than others and not built for those requirements, is like forcing a square peg into a round hole. It won't work. Instituting massive change will bring chaos, and that chaos would bring with it the worst-case scenario -- a loss of confidence by the people in the results of those elections.

Even Democratic Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia has come forward to push back against this legislation because of its overtly partisan nature. That's not how election administration is done in Ohio, and that's not how it should happen in Washington DC.

This resolution sends a strong message to our leaders in Washington DC. With a unified voice, Ohio's General Assembly must tell them to vote against HR 1 and protect state-run elections.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important piece of legislation.

Yours in service,



Frank LaRose

Ohio Secretary of State