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Written Testimony

H. J. R. 19

Government Accountability and Oversight Committee
Corey Roscoe, The Humane Society of the United States

December 4, 2018

Chair Blessing and members of the Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, my name is Corey Roscoe and I am the Ohio State Director for the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) the nation's most effective animal protection organization. On behalf of the HSUS and our Ohio members and supporters, I offer testimony on House Joint Resolution 19 to modify requirements for the initiative process.

The HSUS strongly opposes any attempts to weaken or take away the rights of Ohio citizens to make laws in their state to protect themselves, vulnerable populations and the issues that they care about. Across the nation, citizens have successfully taken important animal welfare issues to the people through the initiative petition process. People who care about animal welfare also care about initiative and referendum rights and many consider the citizen's initiated constitutional amendment the truest form of democracy.

We oppose creating a supermajority requirement for voters to amend the constitution. Further, modifying the process to make registered voter signatures expire after 180 days of date of signing and changing the date for when registered voter signatures are submitted to the Secretary of State drastically shortens the signature collection phase, relegates passionate volunteers to Ohio's harshest weather months and takes major festivals, farmer's markets and fairs held typically in May and June off the table creating less opportunities for volunteers to interact with the public. Citizens should have a reasonable opportunity to access the ballot.

These proposed changes will make it nearly impossible for everyday Ohioans to participate in citizen initiated ballot measures and dishonors those who fought so hard in 1912 to give Ohioans this right.

The HSUS and our large base of supporters stand with Ohio voters and urge you to vote down HJR 19 and maintain the integrity of our democratic process.

Thank you for your time and consideration.