



**Cuyahoga County Board of Elections  
Senate Bill 44 Proponent Testimony**

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**Presented by Director Pat McDonald  
Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee  
Wednesday, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017**

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Chairman Col-ie, Vice Chair You-Ker, Ranking Minority Member You-Co, distinguished members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony this morning for Senate Bill 44. I have been advocating for electronic campaign finance filing since Cuyahoga County adopted a new charter government in 2010. The framers of this new charter felt strongly that campaign finance information should be easily accessible to the public, and were frustrated that Ohio law stood in the way of the transparency that they desired in the newly formed government. In 2011 I received approval of a bipartisan resolution of support for this idea from the Ohio Association of Election Officials.

Currently, Ohio Law does not allow county boards of elections to permit electronic filing of campaign finance reports, even on a voluntary basis. This legislation, which I'm pleased to say has bipartisan support, would allow local boards of elections to employ 21<sup>st</sup> century technology, and would have the added benefit of increasing public access to information contained within campaign finance reports.

Modernizing Ohio's campaign finance law will provide easier access for candidates and committees to file their reports with local Boards of Elections, and most importantly, provide increased transparency for the public. In Cuyahoga County, my agency processes campaign finance reports for offices in 59 municipalities, 31 school districts, and 18 judicial jurisdictions, as well as 13 county offices. In 2016, 1,137 filings were processed, and over the last five (5) years, the average number of filings processed equates to 1,425 per year. Beginning in 2007, the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections began posting scanned copies of audited reports to our website in an effort to increase public access, but this is a step that most boards of elections do not have the resources to take, and these reports are still not searchable.

Currently, anyone interested in finding specific donor or expenditure information is required to manually look over hard copies of hand-written campaign finance reports. In this technological day and age, the public expects better than this, and deservedly so. The Secretary of State's system allows for anyone to quickly and easily search individual donors, donations, expenditures, or loans, simply by entering a last name or a portion of a campaign committee's name. This level of detailed access to this type of information is unprecedented in Ohio, and passing SB 44 would allow for candidates to file electronically with no mandatory threshold if they choose to.

The State of Ohio has made great strides in recent years in increasing online access to state and local government checkbooks. It is time to put Ohio's political checkbooks online, and SB 44 will do just that. Ohio's voters deserve to know who is providing funds to candidates and campaigns that are seeking their vote.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

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