

**Testimony on Senate Bill 194 –  
*Voter Registration Systems*  
Before the Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee  
By Jen Miller  
October 2, 2019**

Chairman Schuring, Vice Chair Rulli, and Ranking Member O’Brien and esteemed Committee Members: Voter registration has been a priority of the League of Women Voters of Ohio since 1920, both in terms of directly registering voters as well as improving registration policies. Our voter registration drives used to entail League members picking up citizens in their cars to drive them to the county Board of Elections during business hours. In 1977, we secured a legislative victory for mail-in registration. We also were incredibly supportive of Ohio’s more recent adoption of online voter registration.

This week, we have hundreds of volunteers in the field getting eligible Ohioans registered, and given that commitment to voters, I come to you with an urgent request to upgrade Ohio’s registration system.

The magnitude of this need became ever more clear during the most recent supplemental process, where infrequent voters are removed from the voter rolls. The League applauds the Secretary of State for making the purge list aka the registration reset list public, because that transparency helped protect eligible Ohio citizens from being wrongfully removed. However, it also provided insights into policy changes that we must make before the 2020 election.

Of the 235,000 voter files on the most recent list to be removed, more than 4,000 had voted in 2016 or 2018 (that number grows across the entire statutory period). Another 11,000 had received conflicting information about their voter registration status. Countless Ohioans who changed addresses within the same county were at risk of removal from the voter rolls as well, which would have violated state and federal law.

Secretary LaRose and LWVO grappled over these data management errors, and we applaud his efforts to prevent the wrongful removal of tens of thousands of Ohioans who have voted recently, received conflicting information, or have not moved out of county.

However, we remain concerned that Ohio's voter registration system is outdated, insecure, and dangerously prone to errors. At the very minimum, Ohio should be reviewing and approving voter registration vendors for security and quality, just as it does for voting machines.

This bill would rename the Board of Voting Machine Examiners to be the Board of Voting Equipment Examiners, and require each county Board of Election to select vendors for registration systems from an approved list. We also agree that a cybersecurity expert should serve on the Board of Voting Equipment Examiners, because that expertise is needed for vetting voting machines and registration systems alike.

Two simple amendments could be added to this bill that would also improve Ohio's voter registration system and the fairness of the supplemental process by creating more uniformity for list maintenance as required by state and federal law. First, this committee should clarify that signing petitions is an electoral activity sufficient to prevent a voter from being removed from the rolls during the supplemental process. Some individuals who have signed a petition in the last six years were recently removed from the rolls, while others who engaged in this same activity were not because of arbitrary differences between county procedures. When an infrequent voter signs a petition, that should be adequate assurance that they are indeed alive and have not moved.

Similarly, counties do not have uniform recordkeeping when a voter's status changes; for example, those who change their names after marriage or have finished serving their felony sentences. Some counties assign these individuals new voter identification numbers, while others update their existing voter identification number. This practice carries the risk that a voter's registration and electoral history are not carried over with the new voter identification number. As a result, voters who voted or engaged in other elective activity in the last six years could be erroneously placed in confirmation status, because their voting activity was not transferred to the new voter identification number. The inconsistency in practice also creates more challenges for the Secretary of State and voting rights groups to ensure the accuracy of voter rolls.

Voting is the engine of our great democracy, and we must do everything we can to protect this sacred right, starting with ensuring that Ohio's voter registration is secure, accurate, and fair.

Please contact me with additional questions at [director@lwvohio.org](mailto:director@lwvohio.org) or 614-469-1505.

*The League of Women Voters of Ohio, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.*