**Interested Party Testimony**

**Senate Bill 52**

**Tim Ward, Ohio Association of Election Officials**

Chairman Coley, vice-chair Huffman, ranking member Craig and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee:

My name is Tim Ward. I am director of the Madison County board of Elections, Co-Chair of the legislative committee and past president of the Ohio Association of Election Officials (OAEO). I would like to offer a couple of suggested amendments to SB 52.

While our association has not taken a formal position on SB 52, we would like to propose two amendments to the sections dealing with post-election audits. As the committee has heard in previous testimony, post-election audits have been done in Ohio for some time, but only as required by a federal court decree, and later Secretary of State directive. They have never been required by Ohio law. Thus, SB 52 offers a unique opportunity to improve upon what we are currently doing.

First, the committee should be aware that post-election audits have consistently confirmed what election officials have known for some time; Ohio runs extraordinarily accurate elections. Audits routinely show 100% accuracy, and at worst show accuracy to within hundredths of a percentage point. This is a fact of which we should all be proud.

With that being said, OAEO would suggest two changes to SB 52. The first would be to only require audits for regularly state scheduled primary and general elections. In other words, May and November elections and the March presidential primary. It should be noted that doing so would be a major expansion of the elections we currently audit. The most pressing reason to do this, is to avoid the confusion and undue burden or requiring audits for August special and municipal primary elections. These elections fall well within the “90-day crunch period” of preparing for other major election dates. To require audits of these elections within six days of their completion would mean pulling staff away from critical election preparation tasks, sequestering machines for the audit that should be getting tested for the next election, and unnecessarily interfering with the multitude of responsibilities that immediately precede primary and general elections. In short, auditing these elections would jeopardize our ability to prepare for the next major election on the calendar. As noted above, auditing primary and general elections is already a major expansion of our requirements.

Secondly, OAEO would recommend allowing any automatic, county-wide recount to substitute for one of the three contests the bill would require us to audit. In plain terms, an audit is basically a hand recount. Thus, any automatic recount serves the same purpose as an audit, and should be recognized as such. Bear in mind that audits are time consuming, staff intensive and expensive endeavors. So sensibly allowing automatic recounts to substitute for one of the three required audits saves time and money while accomplishing the exact same policy goals.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions from the committee.