

**Senator Vernon Sykes Senator Nathan Manning**

**Senate District 28 Senate District 13**

Good afternoon Chairman Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig and members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to present Senate Bill 186, which creates the Voter Verification and Registration (VVR) program.

The need for a more modern and streamlined voter registration process in Ohio is clear. Our current structure is mired by outdated processes that create inefficiencies and redundancies. The VVR program will harness agency technology to create a simpler, more user-friendly voter registration experience.

The VVR program allows citizens interacting with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles to register to vote, update their voter registration, and change their party affiliation in real time. This will be done via an “opt-out” process when receiving a new or updated state ID or driver’s license at any of the state’s deputy registrar agencies. By moving this process to an opt-out format, we expect more Ohioans to register and update their registration, which will result in more “active” voters, and the Secretary of State will be better able to coordinate with county Boards of Elections to decrease inaccurate registrations.

The bill includes protections to ensure that only US citizens are utilizing the program. Ohio is in the process of moving to the federally compliant and standard drivers’ licenses and identification cards. In order to obtain these cards, documentation must be presented to the BMV that shows the citizenship or residency status of each applicant. The VVR program allows the Secretary of State to use this data to verify the eligibility of individuals, and the bill affords the Secretary of State the ability to develop additional verification procedures if needed.

SB 186 delegates the authority to create the rules and procedures of the VVR program to the Secretary of State. These rules are subject to Chapter 119 review. Creating the parameters of the program through rule will allow for more nimble implementation, designed and executed by elections administration professionals.

This bill makes critical improvements to our voter registration system. We welcome the opportunity to collaborate and develop a 21st century voter registration system that best serves Ohio’s voters. Thank you, and we are happy to answer any questions at this time.