



**Proponent Testimony on House Bill 487 –
CHANGE BIDDING PROCESS FOR BALLOT PRINTING
Senate Local Government and Elections Committee
Nazek Hapasha, MPA - League of Women Voters of Ohio
May 18, 2022**

Chairwoman Gavarone, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Maharath, and members of the Local Government and Elections Committee: My name is Nazek Hapasha. I am the Policy Affairs Manager at the League of Women Voters of Ohio.

Thank you for allowing me to testify in support of HB 487 today. The League is fiercely nonpartisan with membership in all of Ohio's 33 Senate districts and all but five of Ohio House districts. Our members work hard year round to ensure the success of elections by recruiting poll workers, registering voters, and educating their communities about how to successfully cast their ballot. As such, we know that this bill is important and represents common sense reform that will help counties operate with greater effectiveness and efficiency.

The League believes that voting is a fundamental right that must be guaranteed for all Ohio citizens. Our organization has worked for more than a century to promote the values and processes of representative government. Integral to the work of protecting the right to vote is ensuring the integrity of the processes and systems of our elections infrastructure.

As Representative Young mentioned in his sponsor testimony, it has been almost forty years since the ballot and printing procurement statutes for Ohio's Boards of Elections have been updated, and HB 487 offers desperately needed updates to a changed elections and voting landscape. Removing requirements that the vendor be based in Ohio and reducing the amount of the bond will undoubtedly increase competition, lower prices, and allow more flexibility to meet the diverse needs of Ohio's 88 counties; and requiring that the contract be awarded to the most qualified responsible bidder that meets the minimum standards established the Secretary of State is a common sense measure that will increase quality assurance.

Several Ohio county Boards of Elections have faced challenges related to this issue in the last few years and as recently as the May 2022 primary that likely could have been prevented by HB 487's provisions. The number of Ohioans who prefer a mail-in ballot has increased, and we expect this preference to continue. During the last general election, current regulations regarding the printing of ballots left Boards of Elections with minimal options, and vendors ultimately could not meet deadlines. In several counties throughout Ohio, including but not limited to

Summit, Montgomery, Butler, and Lucas, voters were late to receive their absentee ballots and/or BOEs were scrambling to print ballots after they had to terminate original vendor contracts after the start of early voting.¹ On the first day of early voting in the May 2022 primary, it was reported that Cuyahoga County had not received regular ballots from their printer and instead had to use temporary ballots that were later remade by bipartisan teams.²

We can tell you from our direct grassroots work with voters across this state that these are the kinds of problems that cause voters to doubt that their vote and the election system itself is secure. While we cannot foresee and avoid any and every issue that might arise, we urge this body to take every step possible to improve voting and elections systems and process and address problems when and where possible so that Ohioans can cast their ballot with ease and confidence.. We stand ready to work with you to update other aspects of election administration such as requiring the approval of other types of vendors and modernizing voter registration systems through future legislative efforts as well.

The League of Women Voters of Ohio was formed in May 1920 out of Ohio's woman suffrage movement. The League is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League has almost 4000 members and 32 local Leagues and At-Large Units across the Buckeye State.

¹ *In Ohio, a Printing Company Is Overwhelmed and Mail Ballots Are Delayed;*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/16/us/politics/ohio-mail-ballots-trump.html>

² *Cuyahoga County begins Ohio Primary early voting with temporary ballots;*

<https://www.wksu.org/government-politics/2022-04-06/cuyahoga-county-begins-ohio-primary-early-voting-with-temporary-ballots>