



Opposition Testimony to House Joint Resolution 1
Jen Miller, League of Women Voters of Ohio
April 19, 2023

Chair Plummer, Vice Chair Hillery, Ranking Member Mohamed, and esteemed committee:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today in opposition of House Joint Resolution 1. As the Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of Ohio, I am here on behalf of our 3,500 dues-paying members, who live in all but four Ohio House districts.

Ohio's long tradition of direct democracy has been enshrined in the Ohio Constitution since 1912. One person, one vote is a value held sacred by Ohioans from Lake Erie to the Ohio River and from the Indiana to the Pennsylvania borders.

Despite the claims of HJR1 supporters, the ballot initiative process is not easy nor is it overused. Successfully placing a Constitutional initiative on the ballot requires hundreds of thousands of verified signatures in at least half of Ohio's 88 counties. It's even harder for ballot initiatives to pass; since 1912, only 69 citizen-initiated constitutional amendments have been placed on the ballot in Ohio, and only 26.1% passed.

Yet ballot initiatives have improved the daily lives of Ohioans living in each of our 88 counties and in every Ohio House district. Ohio voters have approved pensions for war veterans, funded school construction, and placed protections for the Ohio Constitution from monopolies. Ohioans voted to raise the minimum wage, provide low-income housing assistance, fund conservation and recreation areas, and invest in local communities, infrastructure improvements, and economic development. Indeed some of the best policies in Ohio have been passed for and by the people through Constitutional ballot initiatives.

The League is honored to stand with more than 225 allied organizations who represent Ohio citizens from all walks of life in opposition to this threat to direct democracy. HJR1 is a direct attack on democracy and freedom as we know it in Ohio. It is undemocratic and unfair, because it would shred our constitution and abandon our proud tradition of direct democracy. It is unnecessary, because the process is already challenging but not overused. And lastly, it is unpopular.

Police officers and firefighters. Construction workers and nurses. Faith leaders and teachers. Good government groups, local civic organizations, and so many others stand firmly in opposition to HJR1. And I must warn you that we will collectively be ready to defeat it at the ballot box, if needed.

Why? Because HJR1 will have the *opposite* of the desired effect claimed by its supporters. It will make it almost impossible for anyone *except* deep-pocketed groups to fund successful GOTV campaigns and extensive media buys that would now be required to have a ballot initiative passed at the higher approval rate.

Stand with countless Ohioans from all walks of life by voting No on HJR1.

I am happy to answer any questions. Please feel free to contact me to discuss further at director@lwvohio.org or 614-469-1505. Thank you.

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 34 local Leagues across the Buckeye State.