



Opposition Testimony to Senate Joint Resolution 2

Jen Miller, League of Women Voters of Ohio

May 2, 2023

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today in opposition of Senate Joint Resolution 2. 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.

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.

Despite the claims of SJR2 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.

The League is honored to stand with 240 allied organizations who represent Ohio citizens from all walks of life in opposition to this threat to direct democracy. Police officers and firefighters. Electricians, construction workers, and nurses. Faith leaders, civil rights groups, farmers, and teachers. Good government organizations, former Governors, and former AGs. Republicans, Democrats, and independents. So many stand firmly in opposition to SJR2.

We know that you are getting a lot of pressure from special interests, like billionaire Richard Uihlein from Illinois, who want you to rewrite the rules and shred our Constitution. But I am here to ask you to do right by Ohio taxpayers, voters, and elections officials by not only rejecting SJR2, but making sure that there is no August Special Election..

In his 1967 inaugural address as Governor of California, the late Ronald Reagan said: "Government is the people's business, and every man, woman and child becomes a shareholder with the first penny of tax paid." As the budgeting process continues, you know very well that there is great competition for Ohio's tax dollars: roads, bridges, public transportation, clean water, local government support, education, services for seniors and people with disabilities, economic development, state parks, and tourism. I ask you to be good stewards of Ohio's tax dollars by rejecting an August Special election and to apply that \$20 Million to other needs. Even within the elections space, there are far better uses for funds including voter education, modernizing voter registration, and increasing poll worker pay.

In August 1946, during his service as Army Chief of Staff, Dwight D. Eisenhower addressed Brazil's Constituent Assembly, saying: "Democracy is essentially a political system that recognizes the equality of humans before the law." Our commitment to equality in this nation and in this great state, clearly must extend to voting. We must ensure that every vote counts equally. SJR2 is a brazen attack on the sacred principle of one-person, one-vote, and it must be stopped.

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.