

Committees:

Ways and Means (Ranking Member)

Finance and Appropriations

**Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture,
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(Ranking Member)**

State and Local Government

Public Utilities

Armed Services



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HB 21 Sponsor Testimony: House Government Oversight Committee

Chair Peterson, Vice-Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Forhan, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 21, which moves Ohio's Presidential election year primary election date to the same date as the non-Presidential Election year primary date — the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May. Every fourth year, since the mid 1990's, we have scheduled our primary election in mid-March, allegedly for the purposes of Ohio being more of a player in the Presidential Primary races. Ohio's influence on that process has proven to be dubious at best, and it's time to return to a normal and consistent election schedule.

The benefits of approving the change are several:

1. Candidates for all federal, state, and county offices will not have to be filing petitions for nomination to be on the November ballot almost 11 months prior to that actual election in the preceding calendar year.
2. Voter confusion will be minimized with a consistent date every spring (and assuredly better weather).
3. With the redistricting process looming again, it provides more time to get all the ducks in a row before filing deadlines (God forbid two primaries again).
4. It will shorten the election season and potentially allow more time for governing and less for partisan politics.

My proposal has already received support from the leaders of the Ohio Association of Election Officials. That Association's President, Sherry Poland, Hamilton County Board Director, stated that "For too many years, the presidential primary has been a moving target, creating confusion for voters, poll workers, election officials and candidates alike."

Paul Adams, Lorain County Board Director and State Association First Vice-President said "Consistency is a key ingredient for successful elections, and the shifting dates for the presidential primary has long caused significant issues planning these elections. Recently, Ohio's

presidential primary was held on St. Patrick's Day, a move that highlighted why Ohio should stick with May for all of its primary elections."

This measure is bi-partisan and has 9 co-sponsors including Committee Member Seitz, Ranking Member Forhan, and Committee Member Issacsohn. Previously, in the 133rd General Assembly, Representative Jack Cera introduced this legislation.

I've been around for a lot of presidential elections in Ohio and waiting until May isn't making Ohio irrelevant in presidential elections. Actually, the last time Ohio tipped a presidential primary race, I believe, was in 1976 when Jimmy Carter won Ohio's Democratic Presidential Primary, and it was held on June the 8th that year.

This is a primary election. Not just for people running for President, but also for those running for Congress, for the State House, for every county office except one commissioner and the county auditor. Numerous issues also make it to the ballot at these elections, but decisions to beat the deadlines for their placement must be made in the calendar year prior to that March primary date, before the books on one calendar fiscal year have been closed, and before candidates elected to office at local elections a month earlier have even taken the oath for their term in office.

We are all keenly aware that many of our districts and counties substantially favor one political party over the other when all is said and done in the November general election. Primary elections have in so many cases been the real determinant in who ends up serving. Many of our colleagues are here this term because they were victorious in an August election for their party's nomination, but we also know that it was an election that did not see robust voter turnout, because of its unusually scheduled date. Going forward, if nominations secured in a party primary are in so many cases the decisive election, we should be doing our utmost to discourage confusion and encourage greater participation by a common and consistent date every year.

I believe it is imperative and important that we schedule elections for the ease and the convenience of the citizens and folks that have to administer them. We've just finished a most bizarre election year that not only confused voters, but also discouraged participation. The citizens, the "We the People" should be our main concern in scheduling and conducting elections, not the national political parties and the cadre of national political nominating convention delegate wannabe's.

Mr. Chairman, and Committee members, I don't see any downside to codifying our primary election date to the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May, and I hope you agree that there are indeed positive benefits derived in doing so. I would be pleased to attempt to answer any questions that are posed today. Thank you for your attention and consideration.