

Representative Thomas Hall
46th House District
House Bill 208 Sponsor Testimony

Chairman Peterson, Vice-Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 208, which seeks to create a closed primary system in Ohio. This bill will provide party members the opportunity to choose the candidate that best represents them and their values, while also preventing non-party members the ability to manipulate the open primary nomination process for the benefit of the opposing party. I have been working closely with the Ohio Secretary of State's team throughout the process of drafting this legislation.

This legislation would establish an easy process for voters to affiliate with a political party. Under this bill, voters would have the opportunity to affiliate with a party by updating their voter registration to notate their choice of party. Voters may also choose to not be affiliated with a political party. All currently affiliated voters would have their party affiliation grandfathered under this bill; these voters would not have to take any action. Once a voter is affiliated with a political party, they remain affiliated until they update their voter registration and notate they wish to join another party or wish to not be affiliated with any political party. Unaffiliated voters may still vote in a primary election by pulling an "issues only" ballot.

To further ease this transition, the deadline to update party affiliation aligns with the voter registration deadline. Voters would have until the voter registration deadline to choose to affiliate with a party for the upcoming primary election. For example, the previous May 2, 2023 primary established a voter registration deadline for April 3, 2023. Voters would have been able

to update their voter registration or register to vote with a party affiliation by April 3rd to vote in the May 2nd primary for a partisan candidate.

It's important to note that this change would not be unique to Ohio. Delaware, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Oregon and Pennsylvania all have closed primaries.

Chairman Peterson and member of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on this important bill. I would be happy to take any questions at this time.