

May 13, 2024

To: Chair Peterson,  
Vice Chair Thomas  
Ranking Member Humphrey

My name is Caitlyn Weyer of Stark County, Ohio. I have been an attorney for ten years and currently hold the position of Law Director for Alliance, Ohio. I was appointed to that position in September 2021 and subsequently elected for the balance of the unexpired term in January 2022. I was recently re-elected to that position in January 2024. In December 2023, I filed a petition for candidacy for Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Stark County.

In 2019, I went through the Stark County Probate Court and acquired a legal name change by court order. My prior name was Caitlyn Rhea Schneider and I changed it to Caitlyn Rhea Weyer. I did this to reflect the last name of my long-time significant partner. Approximately two weeks before the March 2024 primary election, I was made aware of R.C. Section 3513.271 and R.C. Section 3513.06 regarding change of name of candidates. Upon reading those sections I realized that I had not complied with the requirements on any of the three petitions I had filed. While I understand it is my responsibility to know the law, I was caught off guard because there isn't even a line on the petition to comply with that section. Because I had not complied with this, I made the decision to withdraw my candidacy for judicial office even though the time to challenge that petition had passed. I did that because of the second part of this section which indicates that if you have been elected under a changed name without complying with the code sections, you shall be suspended from the office and shall be liable for salary received. Had I been elected, I would have been immediately removed.

These sections also impacted my status as Law Director and I resigned from that position on the same day I withdrew as candidate for judge. While I was subsequently re-appointed by the Mayor and then the Central Committee, I will have to run for the position again in two years to fill the remainder of the unexpired term. Because I must run for Law Director in two years, I will be precluded from running for a judicial office that may open that year. The impact this law has had on my life is significant.

I have studied these sections and tried to determine the relevance of these laws to election matters. The only place your prior name must appear is on the petition, it will not appear on the ballot. Because of that, its purpose cannot be to protect the voters from being fooled by someone trying to gain an unfair advantage by changing their name to something more well known. A name change by marriage is the only true exception to these laws. Marriage is more difficult for voters to verify than a legal name change. The process, I went through is public court record and the process requires an application, publication in the newspaper, and a public hearing. It is a fairly in-depth process whereas a marriage is not. Additionally, these laws do not lay out an exception for a name change through divorce which is also a public court record. I truly cannot see the purpose of these laws.

I believe adding exceptions for a legal name change as well as a name change due to divorce would only make sense. I also believe there should be thought given to what the penalties are for non-compliance. I have played out in my head the worst-case scenario for my situation had I not been made aware prior to the March primary. If I would have been elected, I would have done so without complying with these laws. I could have served five and a half years of that term and suddenly been suspended from the office and forced to pay back the salary I had earned from those five years. That is a steep and unjust penalty, in my opinion. I believe there should at least be a time limit on the penalty set forth in these laws.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



Caitlyn R. Weyer