

Proponent Testimony of HB 472 (*135th General Assembly*)

Before the Ohio House Committee on Homeland Security

By Matthew Turk

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Chairman Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the House Homeland Security Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of H.B. 472.

I'm a data analytics professional and I've been analyzing Ohio election records and voter rolls in order to gauge the robustness of Ohio election systems. I support House Bill 472 to adjust the current laws in Ohio and strengthen our elections in Ohio and ensure Ohioans' votes are properly counted.

Current laws do not properly check if voters are eligible before election day. County officials cannot verify if voters are citizens or residents where they say they live. This could hurt the integrity of elections and go against federal law.

Ohio only checks if non-citizens voted after elections through audits. But these audits do not catch all non-citizen voters. Over 78% of Ohioans supported an amendment in 2022 to ban non-citizens from voting in state elections. In summary, H.B. 472 is needed to fix these issues and improve voter verification to ensure only eligible voters can register and vote in Ohio.

Ohio election officials face a growing challenge in validating the citizenship status of registered voters amid an influx of non-citizens arriving at the southern border. According to data from the Ohio Department of Public Safety, over 200,000 non-citizens have been issued state identification cards in recent years. However, the agencies responsible for registering voters and managing the voter rolls do not currently have the ability to reliably check the citizenship status of new registrants.

As thousands of migrants cross into the U.S. each month seeking asylum, many are being temporarily settled in states like Ohio. While going through legal processing, these non-citizens are able to obtain driver's licenses, Social Security numbers, and other documentation that could potentially enable fraudulent voter registration. Some advocates argue this population is being encouraged to register, despite citizenship being a requirement.

The issue lies in the lack of coordination and access to citizenship information between the different state and local agencies involved in the process. While the Bureau of Motor Vehicles collects citizenship data for driver's licenses, that information is not systematically shared with boards of election. Registration forms also do not require proof of citizenship, allowing non-citizens to register using only a partial Social Security number.

Once registered, it can take years to remove ineligible voters from the rolls. Federal law prohibits removing any voter within 90 days of an election and allows registered voters to remain listed for up to two general election cycles before any removal efforts can begin. By that time, thousands may have been erroneously registered due to the gaps in validating citizenship upfront.

In response, state legislators have proposed the Ohio Votes Count Act. The new law would require election authorities to more frequently access citizenship records from the BMV and establish stronger verification procedures before issuing voter identification numbers. Proponents argue this is necessary to maintain the integrity of the registration process and ensure only eligible Ohio citizens can register and vote as intended by law.

With a flawed system and an influx of vulnerable non-citizens, the risks of fraudulent voting and inaccurate voter rolls continue to grow. Ohio's election officials urgently need reforms to reliably validate citizenship and preserve the accuracy of registered voters.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony.

Respectfully submitted,
Matthew Turk