



**Opposition Testimony to Senate Joint Resolution 2**  
**Senate General Government Committee**  
**Mia Lewis, Common Cause Ohio**  
**April 18, 2023**

Senator Michael Rulli, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the General Government Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I am the associate director of Common Cause Ohio. For over 50 years Common Cause has advocated to promote an open and accountable government that serves the public interest.

In our democratic republic, Teddy Roosevelt explained, we delegate power to you, our elected representatives, to do the work of legislating so that we can improve society. But sometimes, when perhaps you are not listening to the people, it is necessary and proper for Ohio voters to take their concerns directly to the ballot. "Direct Democracy" lets the people speak when the legislature would silence them.

Teddy Roosevelt said to Ohio's Constitutional Convention in 1912: "I protest against any theory that would make of the constitution a means of thwarting instead of securing the absolute right of the people to rule themselves." SJR2 would do just that, and that's why, in order preserve the purpose and intent of our Constitution, you must vote no.

Since the outcome of that Convention in 1912, Ohioans from across the political spectrum have used the right to amend our Constitution via the petition process. **Used** but not **abused**. [Citizen initiatives are not overly common](#)—nor could they be: the process is burdensome, arduous and taxing. Trust me, no one starts an initiative campaign lightly.

We are not suffering through a deluge of frivolous, ill-intentioned or pernicious ballot measures. Quite the contrary. There hasn't been a citizen initiated ballot measure on the ballot since 2018. Over the past 10 years, there were only four elections with ballot measures through signature collection. Plus, as you recall, in 2015, voters added protections to make sure that the initiative process could not be abused by wealthy interests.

So, what exactly is the problem? After 111 years of a process working as it should, why is there a sudden urgency to fix something that isn't broken? Citizen-led initiatives allow the people to speak. Is it possible you don't want to hear what they have to say?

Ohioans from all sides of the political spectrum are looking at this process and scratching their heads. Something feels off.

- The professed concern for the Constitution that is leading some to rush to make a drastic and at least semi-permanent change without full and considered debate.
- The jarring contradiction of saying the Ohio Constitution should only be changed by a super majority—then pushing to put the question on the ballot in an election that might draw less than ten percent of voters.
- The head-spinning about-face over August Special elections: just a few months ago Secretary LaRose stated, “These unnecessary ‘off-cycle’ elections aren’t good for taxpayers, election officials or the civic health of our state. It’s time for them to go!” Now, \$20 million is not too much to force an August Special this year for this one single issue that could easily and more appropriately be placed on the ballot at a time when more voters would weigh in.

The people of Ohio see the contradictions and it causes them to lose confidence. It just doesn't pass the sniff test.

Changing the pass rate from 50%+1 to a supermajority of 60% will not keep the Ohio Constitution safe from monied interest—quite the opposite: it will make it almost impossible for anyone *except* big money special interests to successfully pass a ballot initiative in Ohio.

Most importantly, moving away from one person, one vote isn't protection for our Constitution, it's an injury: No one, on any side of the political spectrum, wants to live under minority rule. Our Constitution is the very document that should protect us from the prospect of a minority of voters being able to thwart the will of the majority.

I urge you to take a stand against minority rule. Please protect our Ohio Constitution and oppose Senate Joint Resolution 2. Thank you for this opportunity to share my concerns with you.