



Ohio Citizen Action

The premier grassroots mobilizing and organizing team in the Midwest

Ohio Senate General Government Committee

Opponent Testimony on Senate Bill 153

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Chairperson Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear, and members of the Ohio Senate General Government Committee, I am Rachael Belz, CEO of Ohio Citizen Action. This testimony is presented on behalf of our more than 32,000 members and all Ohioans who have a stake in the decisions made by this committee.

Ohio Citizen Action is a grassroots organization that has been dedicated to protecting and strengthening the democratic rights of Ohioans for the past 50 years. We talk to Ohio voters where they live, often on their front porches, about issues important to them as consumers, parents, and workers across the state. We help them to amplify their voices and stand up for the things they hold most dear.

We strongly oppose Senate Bill 153, a deeply flawed and anti-democratic piece of legislation that undermines voter rights, suppresses access to the ballot, and erodes the integrity of Ohio's elections. This bill represents yet another calculated effort by state lawmakers to manipulate the electoral system for their own advantage, silencing the voices of Ohio voters.

Senate Bill 153 is an extreme and unwarranted attack on the petition process and voter rights. It imposes an arduous citizenship verification process that would disenfranchise tens of thousands of eligible Ohio voters, particularly married women, young people, less affluent individuals, and people of color. These groups, who often already face disproportionate barriers to voting, would be unfairly targeted by this overly complex system, preventing them from exercising their fundamental right to cast a ballot. This is not about election security—it is about erecting obstacles to suppress participation.

Senate Bill 153 also seeks to intimidate Ohioans by threatening petition circulators with politically motivated investigations and imposing overly burdensome requirements for gathering signatures. These measures make it significantly harder and even more intimidating for citizens to place initiatives on the ballot, a critical tool for Ohioans to push back against government

overreach, hold politicians accountable, and shape policy in our communities. By stifling the petition process, Senate Bill 153 undermines the strongest mechanisms we have for direct democracy in our state.

The legislation promotes voter suppression by placing an unfunded burden on already strained election staff. In 2022, one million Americans registered or updated their voter information, with only 6% doing so in person. Under this bill, an estimated 18,800 additional Ohioans could be forced to visit their local Boards of Elections in person, overwhelming limited resources and creating unnecessary delays. This additional strain would exacerbate Ohio's over-reliance on provisional ballots, which already saw 34,000 rejected in November 2024. Senate Bill 153 would cause the number of provisional ballots cast—and subsequently discarded—to skyrocket, further disenfranchising voters.

Senate Bill 153 is a clear attempt by state lawmakers to maintain their stranglehold on Ohio's elections and block access to the ballot. Following the special election in August 2023 that would have made initiated Constitutional Amendments nearly impossible to place on the ballot and increased the approval threshold to 60% for passage and the subsequent opposition to the proposed Amendment to eliminate gerrymandering, Senate Bill 153 is the third attempted strike against the integrity of our electoral process in Ohio. The assaults on democracy in this state must stop.

On behalf of Ohio Citizen Action, I urge you to reject Senate Bill 153.

Thank you for your consideration.