



Ohio Environmental Council [Action Fund]

**Opposition Testimony for Senate Bill 63
Ohio Senate General Government Committee
Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund
Spencer E. Dirrig, Vice President of Government Affairs**

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Chairwoman Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear Jr, and members of the Senate General Government Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in opposition to Senate Bill 63. I am Spencer Dirrig, representing the Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund as Vice President of Government Affairs. We stand firmly against this legislation because it undermines local democracy, limits voter choice, and limits the ability of communities to govern themselves in a way that best reflects their needs and values. These needs include voter's desires to advance environmental policies in their community to promote clean air, clean water, and robust public green spaces.

An Attack on Local Home Rule

Ohioans have long valued the principle of local home rule, enshrined in our state's constitution, which allows communities to determine how their local governments function. Senate Bill 63 would strip this fundamental right away by imposing a one-size-fits-all approach to local election processes. Cities and counties across Ohio have diverse needs, challenges, and preferences regarding their electoral systems. By dictating from Columbus how these elections must be conducted, SB 63 tramples on the autonomy that Ohio's communities and voters expect and deserve.

This bill would limit the ability of communities to tailor their governance to reflect local values and priorities. Whether through ranked-choice voting, proportional representation, or other reforms designed to improve representation and fairness, local governments should retain the authority to adopt election systems that work best for them. Senate Bill 63 disregards this principle, denying communities the ability to innovate and respond to the will of their residents.

A Reduction in Democratic Participation and Voter Choice

SB 63 also limits democratic participation by prohibiting election reforms that enhance voter choice and engagement. Across the country, cities have successfully implemented alternative voting methods, resulting in higher voter satisfaction, more competitive elections, and elected officials who more accurately represent the electorate's preferences. Preventing Ohio



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municipalities from adopting these reforms only serves to entrench the status quo, suppressing voter engagement and limiting competition in local races.

Research on ranked-choice voting (RCV) has shown that it can increase voter engagement and turnout in certain elections by giving voters more meaningful choices. A [2021 study by FairVote](#) found that RCV led to increased voter participation in local elections, particularly in diverse and historically underrepresented communities. Additionally, the study found that RCV encourages more positive campaigning, as candidates must appeal to a broader base of voters to secure second- and third-choice rankings. Importantly, for this legislation that seeks to ban RCV for local communities, voters in RCV jurisdictions are 17% more likely to turn out for municipal elections than those in non-RCV jurisdictions, according to a [2024 study](#).

By restricting voting options, Senate Bill 63 reduces the ability of Ohioans to make their voices heard. If enacted, this legislation would force communities to abandon electoral reforms promoting majority rule and fairer representation, weakening democracy and further eroding trust in our electoral system.

The Environmental Connection: Protecting Community Voices

The Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund is committed to protecting democracy because a strong democracy is essential for strong environmental policies. When communities can determine how their representatives are elected, they are better positioned to advocate for policies that reflect their environmental and public health priorities. Senate Bill 63 undermines this process by limiting communities' electoral tools to ensure fair and representative governance. A weakened democracy means weakened environmental protections, as corporate and special interests gain even greater influence over policymaking.

Conclusion

The Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund urges this committee to reject Senate Bill 63. This bill is an unnecessary and harmful overreach that suppresses voter participation, curtails local self-governance, and weakens democratic institutions. The citizens of Ohio deserve a system that allows them to choose how their local governments function—not a system dictated by the state government at the expense of voter choice and participation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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