



Ohio Environmental Council [Action Fund]

April 13, 2023

To: Members of the Ohio General Assembly
From: Pete Bucher, Chief of Staff, Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund
Re: OEC Action Fund Urges a NO Vote on HJR 1, SJR 2, HB 144, SB 92

Dear Honorable Legislators,

I am writing to inform you that the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) Action Fund will be scoring the following legislation for the purposes of our Legislative Scorecard for the 135th Ohio General Assembly:

- House Joint Resolution (HJR) 1
- Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 2
- House Bill (HB) 144
- Senate Bill (SB) 92

We urge a NO vote on all four. To the extent that any of these pieces of legislation pass, the OEC Action Fund will be doing extensive public education on the content and the votes on this legislation due to its detrimental impact to Ohioans' right to direct democracy and the ballot initiative process, and subsequently its indirect impact to Ohio's environment and the health of Ohioans.

HJR 1 and SJR 2 are an attempt to silence the power of Ohioans through the ballot initiative process. Over the past two decades, less than twenty citizen-initiated ballot initiatives have been proposed before Ohioans, and only five have been approved. Ohioans already rarely approve these sorts of proposals—they are reluctant to change the Ohio Constitution. **There's no need to change what isn't broken.**

SB 92 and HB 144 are being used as an anti-democratic vehicle for HJR 1/SJR 2. After the Ohio General Assembly effectively ended August special elections last year, the proposed August special election through SB 92/HB 144 is a blatant attempt to place HJR 1/SJR 2 on the ballot during an election few Ohioans will know is happening.

SB 92 and HB 144 are simply a waste of taxpayer dollars and a waste of Ohio's electoral resources all in the service of a fundamentally misguided constitutional amendment.

Ohioans chose, back in 1912, to have 50% of voters approve constitutional amendments. They also required a ballot initiative to gather signatures equal to 10% of the electorate in the last gubernatorial election. The signature gathering requirements for constitutional amendments themselves are the onerous requirement—it costs millions of dollars to fund signature gathering efforts. Yet regardless of who funds a particular signature gathering campaign, every signature must be from an Ohioan registered to vote in this state.



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Once an issue is on the ballot, the legislative authority in that moment now rests with the people, **as established by the Ohio Constitution**. If Ohioans want to enshrine particular policies, programs, or other issues directly into the Ohio Constitution, **that is their inherent right as stated in the Preamble and Article I, Section 2**.

If HJR 1 and/or SJR 2 is referred to the ballot, Ohioans will defeat it. They will not give away their own democratic authority. So rather than waste money, time, and resources on a protracted campaign on both sides, we should end the discussion now, shelving this supposed “solution” for a problem that does not even exist.

For these reasons and more, without significant amendments to proactively enhance Ohioans’ right to direct democracy, **we urge a NO vote on all four pieces of legislation**.

If you have any questions, please direct them to me, Pete Bucher at pbucher@theoec.org.

Sincerely,

Pete Bucher
Chief of Staff, OEC Action Fund