

**TESTIMONY TO THE  
SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
SENATOR CHRIS WIDENER, CHAIR  
MAY 6, 2011  
2:00 P.M.**

Chairman Widener and members of the Senate Finance Committee, good afternoon. I am Philip C. Richter, Executive Director of the Ohio Elections Commission, and am giving testimony today on behalf of the Commission regarding our budget for the next biennium. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to address the committee on behalf of the Commission.

Since the Ohio Elections Commission commenced operations as an independent state agency on January 1, 1996, almost 15,000 cases have been filed with the Commission. In addition, 56 advisory opinions have been issued.

The Commission has reviewed almost 1000 cases on an expedited basis at Probable Cause Panels and decided a number of cases prior to the election at which the matters were to be decided. For example, in the period leading up to the date of the most recent 2010 General Election, the Commission took 5 separate cases from submission, through a Probable Cause Panel Review, and to a final resolution before the full Commission. In 2010, during the 85 days immediately prior to the General Election the Commission reviewed 50 false statement cases at 8 separate probable Cause Panels, resolving 30 cases prior to the election. The Commission has consistently moved cases more quickly to a complete resolution prior to an election, a major improvement that has occurred since the Commission became an independent agency.

The Commission carries out its mission with three (3) employees; myself as Executive Director and Staff Attorney, and 2 administrative assistants. Along with the 7 Commission members, comprised of three (3) democrats, three (3) republicans and one (1) independent, there are ten (10) persons on the Commission's payroll. Although small, the staff of the Commission has been able to efficiently handle the number of cases filed with the Commission on an annual

basis. The Commission's caseload has been fairly consistent since the Commission became an independent agency and I anticipate that the Commission will continue to have a steady caseload into the future. As with the Commission staff, the operational needs of the Commission have been fairly consistent, increasing only because of rising prices, such as higher postage costs, which the Commission cannot control. My staff and I have worked diligently to limit the Commission's expenditure levels, salary increases have been limited throughout the Commission's existence and my salary has not increased in over 4 years. This budget reflects the required cuts as imposed by the office of Budget and Management and will greatly impact the Commission's operations, regardless of the Commission's efforts through the years to frugally operate within the parameters set during previous biennia. Inflationary increases have been the primary basis for any previous increase in the Commission's budget. This budget continues to represent the frugal manner in which this Commission has conducted its operations since becoming an independent agency and continues to reflect the economical manner in which the Commission will maintain its operations through the biennium. Through difficult budget times the Commission has continued to move cases through its processes and continues to perform its basic functions in an efficient and effective manner.

On behalf of the seven members of the Elections Commission, I again want to thank you for the opportunity to address this honorable subcommittee. I will do my best to answer any additional questions that you may have regarding the Commission, its current budget, this budget request, and our overall operations.

Thank you very much.