

***Columbus Dispatch* Endorses Changes To Ballot Measures After Previous Ballot Failure**

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The Columbus Dispatch endorsed a proposal to make filing a petition for a referendum harder, only two years after a ballot measure shot down an anti-union law the paper supported.

In 2011, Ohio's Republican majority enacted Senate Bill 5, which **drastically restricted** the collective bargaining rights of public workers in Ohio. In the aftermath of the bill's passage, a petition was successfully established to get the bill overturned using the referendum process for the following election. The bill was **overturned** by an overwhelming majority in a victory for Ohio public workers.

The Columbus Dispatch's editorial board came out in favor of the anti-union law, continually reminding readers it supported restricting union's rights. The paper initially took the line that it supported the premise behind the bill but called for a **compromise** on collective bargaining before the referendum, Issue 2, was established. However, after the deadline to fix the bill passed, the editorial board wrote another editorial in **support of Issue 2** and reminded readers the **day before** the election that it endorsed Issue 2.

Now, two years after the defeat of Issue 2, the editorial board has come out to **support a measure** that would make it more difficult to get referendums on the ballot.

The *Dispatch* endorsed a recently enacted bill which would **limit the amount** of time a group has to get an issue on the ballot, giving them only 10 additional days to collect more signatures if the petition is not granted the first time. From the **Dispatch**:

While one can debate exactly what limits are reasonable, a uniform limit does not violate Ohioans' right to place issues on the ballot, it simply ensures that all are subject to the same rule.

Reasonable limitations on the petition process protect us from chaos.

The bill has been rebuked by several groups including **Innovation Ohio**, the **League of Women Voters of Ohio** and We Are Ohio, the group that successfully put Issue 2 on the ballot. As the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* **reported**:

"[Republican Sen. Bill Seitz,] is like the Wizard of Oz and we are pulling the curtain away," said Dennis Willard, communication director for We Are Ohio. "Nothing is broken. What are they trying to fix? 'Uniformity' is just a code word for 'we don't have anything better to say'."

Supporters of the bill claim that it would promote fairness and uniformity by giving everyone the same time period in which to mount petitions. But, Seitz, who is the sponsor of the bill, **admitted** he could not cite specific examples of groups unfairly benefitting or suffering under the current law.

The editorial board also failed to disclose that the bill's roots are tied to the right-wing American Legislative Exchange Council, which *The Columbus Dispatch* has been hesitant to **make links** to previously. According to ALECExposed, a project of the Center for Media and Democracy, Seitz is a **co-chair** of ALEC's Civil Justice Task Force -- the same ALEC committee that adopted **model legislation** calling for changing the ballot initiative process and another stating that **ballot initiatives** were not the ideal means of setting public policy.

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