



OHIO TOWNSHIP ASSOCIATION

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House Local Government Committee

February 22, 2011

HB 50 Annexation Petitions

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Heidi M. Fought and I am the Director of Governmental Affairs for the Ohio Township Association (OTA). On behalf of the Ohio Township Association (OTA), I stand before you this morning in support of the intent and goal of House Bill 50, which requires that a political subdivision be included as an owner for purposes of annexations filed under ORC §709.023.

The intent of HB 50 would be to prevent a municipality from annexing land owned by a political subdivision, other than the state, without the consent of the political subdivision. This merely corrects an unintended consequence of the recent annexation law rewrite (SB 5, 125th General Assembly).

The subject of annexation is a very contentious issue both at the local and state level. A substantial rewrite of the annexation law took place in 2002 and, as we stated in our legislative priorities for this General Assembly, experience has shown that the law needs to be refined particularly with respect to who is considered an owner for purposes of the number of signatures for annexation petitions to go forward under the different annexation methods.

Specifically, township-owned land is being included in annexation petitions and the township has no grounds for objection due to the township not being classified as an owner pursuant to the law. We have heard from townships that have had their cemeteries, parks and even township halls included on Type 2 annexation petitions. This is similar to what you heard Sponsor Snitchler describe relative to a school district in his district.

We have provided the Committee with a letter from Hamilton Township in Warren County and Anderson Township in Hamilton County describing their experiences with this law and their requests for change.

In providing our support for this bill, we would ask that you consider amending HB 50 to include language supported by the Ohio Township Association and introduced by Senator Seitz last General Assembly (SB 297). Senator Seitz introduced his bill at our request and it addresses the very same issue and Code section as HB 50. I have attached the text of ORC §709.02 as proposed in the "As Introduced" version of SB 297 (128th GA) for your review and consideration. We have met with Sponsor Snitchler and expressed our desire to have the language altered. We appreciate his willingness to work with us.

Again, the Ohio Township Association supports the intent and goal of HB 50 and respectfully requests the Committee amend the language as proposed. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to testify this afternoon and would be happy to try and answer any questions.