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H.J.R. 4*
134th General Assembly

Resolution Analysis

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Version: As Reported by House State and Local Government

Primary Sponsors: Reps. Edwards and Seitz

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SUMMARY

- Proposes to amend the Ohio Constitution to prohibit local governments from allowing persons to vote in local elections if they are not qualified to vote in state elections.
- Places the proposal on the ballot at the November 8, 2022, general election.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

The joint resolution proposes to amend the Ohio Constitution to prohibit local governments from allowing persons to vote in local elections if they are not qualified to vote in state elections – for example, non-U.S. citizens or persons under 18.

Currently, the Ohio Constitution specifies that:

Every citizen of the United States, of the age of eighteen years, who has been a resident of the state, county, township, or ward, such time as may be provided by law, and has been registered to vote for thirty days, has the qualifications of an elector, and is entitled to vote at all elections.

In general, this provision has been interpreted to mean that in order to vote in Ohio, a person must be a U.S. citizen, at least 18, a resident of the state for at least 30 days (the period prescribed by law), and registered to vote for at least 30 days before the election.¹ However, in 1917, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that under the home rule provisions of the Ohio

*This analysis was prepared before the report of the House State and Local Government Committee appeared in the House Journal. Note that the legislative history may be incomplete.

¹ Ohio Constitution, Article V, Section 1 and R.C. 3503.01. Federal law also prohibits non-U.S. citizens from voting in federal elections (18 United States Code 611).

Constitution, a city could expand voting rights in city elections. In that case, the Court upheld an East Cleveland charter provision that allowed women to vote in city elections, although at the time, the Ohio Constitution and the U.S. Constitution gave only men the right to vote (see **COMMENT**).²

Under the proposed amendment, the Ohio Constitution would state that *only* a person who meets the listed requirements has the qualifications of an elector, and no person who lacks those qualifications may be permitted to vote in any state or local election. The proposal also amends the home rule provisions of the Constitution to include references to the new restriction.³

If the resolution is adopted, the proposed amendment will appear on the ballot at the general election to be held on November 8, 2022. If it is approved by a majority of the voters, the amendment takes effect immediately.

COMMENT

Today, it appears that only one Ohio municipality allows otherwise-ineligible persons to vote in local elections. In 2020, the Village of Yellow Springs approved a charter amendment to allow non-U.S. citizens to vote in village elections. But, it seems that no noncitizen has registered to vote in the village. If such a person did register, that action likely would trigger a lawsuit. LSC cannot predict how a reviewing court would rule in such a case.⁴

HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	05-17-22
Reported, H. State & Local Gov't	---

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² *State ex rel. Taylor v. French*, 96 Ohio St. 172 (1917).

³ Ohio Const., art. V, sec. 1; art. X, sec. 3; and art. XVIII, sec. 3.

⁴ Megan Bachman, "[Noncitizen voting under fire](#)," *The Yellow Springs News* (August 13, 2020) and Audrey Hackett, "[Voting begins for Nov. 3 election](#)," *The Yellow Springs News* (October 16, 2020). Both articles are available on *The Yellow Springs News* website at ysnews.com.