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## Sponsor Testimony

### Representatives Domenick

#### House Joint Resolution 13

#### February 2, 2010

Chairman Stewart, Vice Chairman Okey and members of the Elections and Ethics Committee, thank you for allowing me the time to give testimony of House Joint Resolution 13. This bill would create the need for a super majority to pass any ballot issue that changes the Ohio Constitution.

In our state over the past few years we have seen so many significant issues going to the ballot, such as banning smoking, raising minimum wage, and most recently casinos. These are important issues, but unfortunately most citizens only know what they are told by the media and in commercials that may or may not reflect the truth. Citizens are generally not fully aware of all the key points of an issue and vote with little information. We have seen it every time an issue is decided at the ballot: citizens come back saying they didn't fully understand what they were voting on..."I didn't know that was in there"...or "I didn't know that would affect me *that way*."

A perfect example is the recent casino issue. After the change to the state constitution had been approved by voters, the negotiations with Columbus began to move the location of the casino. Now, the Ohio Constitution will be open to amendment again...all to move a business a few miles down the road.

My colleague Steve Dyer referred to the House as the "Ohio Board of Zoning Appeals," and those of you who have served as a local official probably recognize there is some truth to this. It's not how we should treat our state constitution.

This resolution would in no way limit the right of the citizens of Ohio to bring initiative petitions. I do not want to hinder the ability of the people of this state to force an issue before the people if we in the legislature are not being responsive. But I do believe that we can raise the bar to ensure that changes to the Ohio constitution really reflect the will of the people.

But are finding many of these initiatives are not initiated by the people of Ohio...but by corporations, many from outside the state. Other states have already taken these steps to make it harder for organizations to come in from the outside and set laws by ballot initiative.

In 2006 Florida passed a law stating that any proposed amendments to or revision of the state constitution must be approved by at least 60 percent of the voters of the state. In other words, they do not want it to be easy to amend the constitution of their state by a simple majority. If their constitution is going to be amended, they want it supported by a super majority of the voters.

I feel that our state needs to be considering the same type of measure. Over the past few years several of the most important issues of our state have been decided by organizations or outsiders who may not



have the best interests of Ohio at heart. We do not want it to be so easy to change our historic constitution.

Chairman Stewart, Vice Chairman Okey and members of the committee, I thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Joint Resolution 13. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.



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