

Bob Taft
2933 Lower Bellbrook Rd.
Spring Valley, OH 45370

Members of the Ohio General Assembly
Statehouse
Columbus, Ohio 43215

April 24, 2023

Dear members of the Ohio House and the Ohio Senate:

As a former Secretary of State of Ohio and Ohio Governor, I urge you (1) not to revive the August special election and (2) not to support a constitutional amendment to raise from a simple majority to 60% the voter approval threshold for amendments to the Ohio Constitution.

I believe the Ohio General Assembly made the right decision when it enacted legislation last December to outlaw August special elections except for fiscal emergencies facing school districts. As Secretary of State I was all too aware that August special elections are too costly for the very low voter turnout that they attract. I concur with current Secretary of State Frank LaRose when he declared "August special elections aren't good for the taxpayer, elections officials, voters or the civic health of our state."

I also believe that it is especially bad public policy to revive the August special election for the purpose of voting on such a consequential constitutional amendment as SJR 2 or HJR 1 which would fundamentally change Ohioans' voting and constitutional rights. For more than 100 years, amendments to the Ohio Constitution have been decided by a simple majority vote. The decision to change such a deeply embedded practice should not be made at a low turnout election. Preferably, this type of issue should be submitted at a November general election when there is maximum voter turnout.

In addition, based on my experience as Governor, I believe it would be a mistake to raise the voter approval threshold for amendments to the Ohio Constitution to 60 percent. If that threshold had been in effect during my time as Governor, two signature initiatives, the Clean Ohio Fund and the Third Frontier Project, would not have been approved. The former was first approved in 2000 by a margin of only 57.4%, even with bipartisan support from U.S. Senator John Glenn as campaign co-chair. The Third Frontier bond issue was defeated in 2003 with 49.2% of the vote and was approved in 2005 by a margin of only 54.1%. Both measures have stood the test of time, contributing importantly to the economy and quality of life of our state.

I urge you to remember that the Ohio Constitution contains a \$750,000 limit on debt the state can incur absent a public vote. For the state to be able to issue general obligation debt to finance or build highways or schools, to protect the environment or create jobs, you must

persuade voters to approve an amendment to the Constitution. With a 60% voter approval requirement, such initiatives may become impossible in the years to come.

For all these reasons, I request that you cease further action on Senate Bill 92 or SJR 2 and HJR 1.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Taft". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bob Taft
Governor of Ohio 1999-2007