

Can your HOA bar political signs? Ohio bill would end bans

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COLUMBUS, Ohio -- A new bill could shake up suburbia by creating a right to plant political yard signs—even if your homeowner’s association says you can’t.

[House Bill 16](#) would let HOAs and local governments keep “reasonable restrictions” about where, when, how big and how many signs people displayed. But outright bans would be prohibited.

“My view of HOAs, personally, is to delegate authority and responsibility for aesthetics, landscaping and things of that nature,” said state Rep. Brian Lorenz, a Powell Republican.

The idea for HB 16 came from a Democratic constituent who wanted to display her sign for Vice President Kamala Harris. She was stopped from doing so by her HOA rules.

“That’s not right,” Lorenz said. “It’s a free speech thing.”

Eight out of 10 single family homes built in the U.S. come with an HOA, according to data from the Foundation for Community Association Research. And about [75 million Americans](#) already live in one. They often come with property restrictions, such as limits on the height of your fence or the colors you can paint your house, and they collect fees from property owners for upkeep of common areas.

“You make a choice to be part of an HOA with full knowledge of what the restrictions are,” said Gary Daniels, a lobbyist for the American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio. “But you’re talking a lot less about choice these days.”

Ohio already blocks associations from restricting displays of the US. and POW/MIA flags. Republicans failed to add [thin blue line flags](#) to that list during the last legislative session.

The ACLU of Ohio opposed the thin blue line bill because it targeted specific speech, but it does not yet have a position on the broader restriction against HOA sign bans.

“Our concern was that they were putting their finger on the scale and saying only this one type of expression. Only pro-law enforcement,” Daniels said.

HB 16 doesn’t doesn’t do that.

“I anticipate we won’t be an opponent on this because it doesn’t take sides,” Daniels said. “This is an improvement over the thinking in last session’s bill.”

Lorenz hopes to have a first hearing by the end of this month and said he expects to have some Democratic support.

“It’s kind of a common sense measure,” he said. “It’s a great bipartisan bill. It takes down barriers of free speech.”