

# Ohio House committee moves transportation budget after GOP drops BMV voter registration requirement

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Cleveland.com

COLUMBUS, Ohio -- An \$11.5 billion budget for maintaining Ohio's roads and bridges unanimously passed the House Finance Committee on Tuesday after Republicans removed language mandating Ohioans prove citizenship before registering to vote at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

"We're not going to require folks to come with proof of citizenship," state Rep. Brian Stewart, a Centerville Republican, said during Tuesday's hearing.

Instead, BMV employees will be prohibited from offering registration forms to people flagged as non-citizens in their system.

That's a change from last week, when Stewart called it a "common sense step in the process that protects the voter rolls and the potential applicants alike."

The idea to verify citizenship grew out of a May report by Secretary of State Frank LaRose that said non-citizens were confused, potentially by language barriers, and accidentally registering to vote.

"Some of these registrations may be the result of an honest mistake," LaRose said in that May statement.

Both non-citizen registration and voting are rare in Ohio. LaRose's office reported [597 non-citizens registrations](#) in 2024. That's 0.0073% of Ohio's 8.2 million registered voters. And most of them never tried to vote. LaRose [referred 138](#) for potential voter fraud prosecution.

Attorney General Dave Yost later indicted six people for voting illegally. [One of them, in Cuyahoga County, was dead.](#)

Republicans also had added reporting license suspensions to the Secretary of State's office into the transportation budget, but that language also was removed.

Stewart said some of his fellow lawmakers suggested voiding registrations after a suspension since Ohioans need a valid ID to vote.

"We've dug a little deeper," Stewart said, "and determined that since you don't need a photo ID to register to vote, we aren't going to tie the two."

With the voter registration changes removed, the transportation budget passed the committee 28-0. State Rep. Bride Rose Sweeney, a Democrat from Westlake, said the unanimous vote wouldn't have happened if the registration rules remained.

"The public deserves to have the opportunity to fully vet any proposed changes to Ohio voting law," Sweeney said in a statement.

The budget now moves to the full House for a vote. After that, the Senate gets its chance to make changes. The goal is to pass a transportation budget by March 31.

Senate President Rob McColley, a Republican from Napoleon, supported BMV citizenship verification when it was first included in the budget.

"I think even one case of voter fraud is too many," McColley told reporters at the time. When asked if the rule belongs in the budget, he responded, "we'll see."

*Cleveland.com reporter Jeremy Pelzer contributed reporting to this article.*