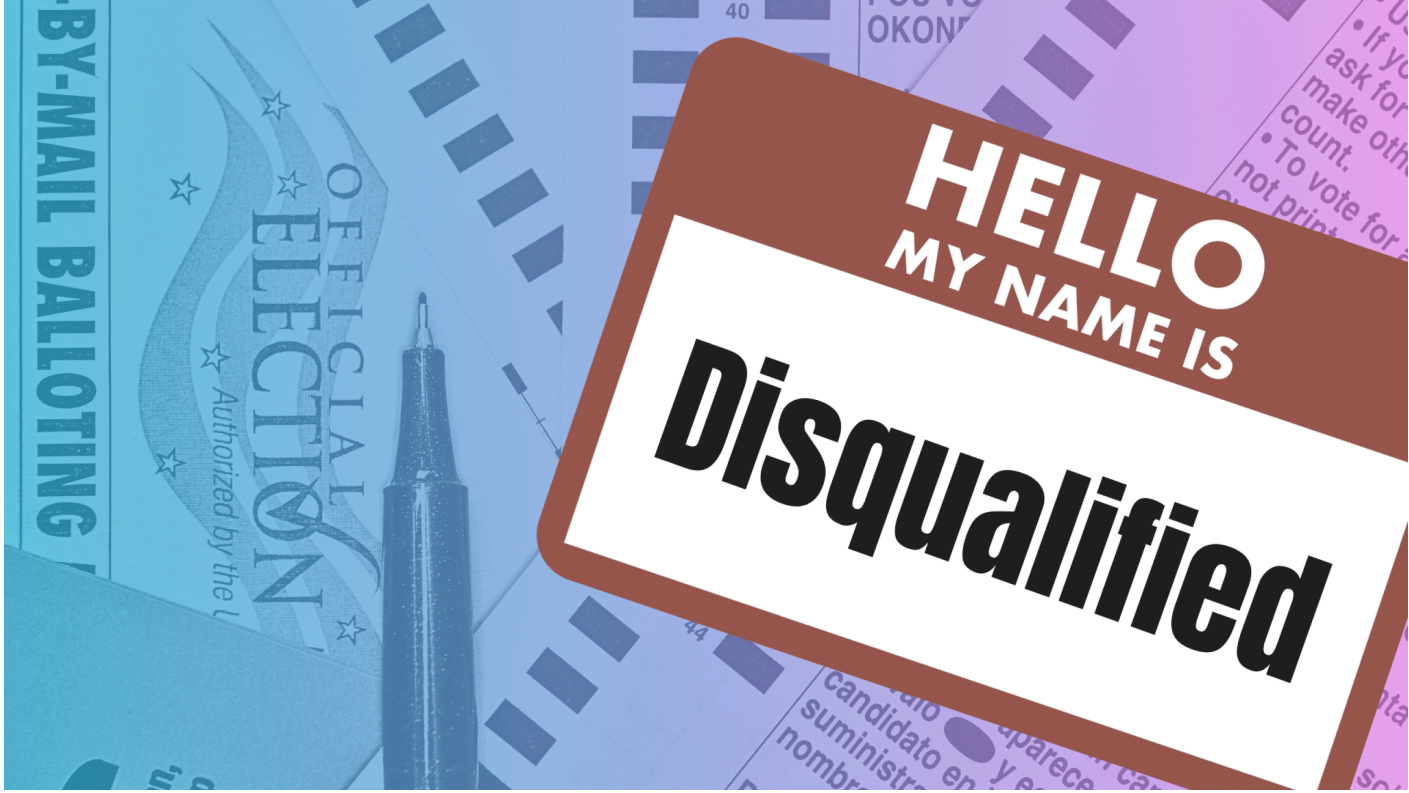




# Republican lawmakers quietly pass bill targeting transgender Ohioans' ability to run for public office

New law limits transgender candidates and expands who can challenge their eligibility for office.

BY H.L. COMERIATO (THEY/THEM) ● **POLITICS, TRANSGENDER** ● DECEMBER 30, 2024



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Members of the Ohio Senate voted to pass the legislation after members of the House Government Oversight Committee **rolled its language** into **Senate Bill (SB) 71** – a separate piece of legislation regarding electoral policy.

Aside from an explicit exception that allows married women to omit their maiden names via the same candidacy petition, Ohioans are already **required to list any legal name changes** that occurred within the last five years on their petitions for candidacy.

SB 71 will further codify the requirement by updating the existing candidacy form to include a designated space to list former legal names and allowing voters registered under any political party to challenge the legitimacy of any candidate based on the suspected existence of prior legal names – both of which could affect transgender candidates disproportionately.

### **Targeting transgender candidates**

Conservative **Reps. Angie King (R-Celina)** and **Rodney Creech (R-West Alexandria)** first **introduced the legislation** as **House Bill (HB) 471** in May of this year.

The bill would have given voters registered under any political party legal footing to challenge the legitimacy of transgender candidates should they fail to publicly list their former legal names, whereas the law at that time only allowed registered voters from the same party as the prospective candidate to formally challenge the candidate's legitimacy, for any reason.

Reps. King and Creech were the only two candidates for the Ohio House to run against transgender candidates in the 2024 general election – facing transgender candidates Bobbie Brooke Arnold and Arienne Childrey, both of whom narrowly avoided disqualification under the law.

A third transgender candidate, Vanessa Joy, was disqualified entirely from appearing on the ballot in Stark County after failing to list her former legal name on her initial application for candidacy, despite the form lacking a designated space to do so.

When speaking about HB 471 on the April 5th episode of “The Windsor Report” — a conservative talk radio show hosted by Jack Windsor, who regularly uses anti-transgender rhetoric to question both the existence as well as the mental health of transgender Ohioans — King directly accused

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exemptions to circumvent the law.”

In 2023, **Rep. King protested outside her own district’s LGBTQ+ pride event** alongside members of a self-identified Christian group and the Aryan White Nationalists, a neo-Nazi group affiliated with the Aryan Freedom Network and organized Ku Klux Klan activity. She was also the co-sponsor of the **bill to ban drag performances outside of adult cabaret venues**.

### Calls for reform

Democrats **introduced their own legislation** to help protect transgender candidates from discrimination throughout the candidacy application and election processes, but the bill failed to gain traction in the Ohio House.



### Ohio Republican cleared to run, open to reforming name-change law used to target transgender candidates

Over the summer, newly appointed conservative Rep. Tex Fischer (R-Boardman) **faced a challenge** under the same law for failing to disclose his own legal name change.

Fischer – who is not transgender – changed his name from “Austin James Fischer” to “Austin James Texford Fischer” in 2020.



Ultimately, Fischer **was cleared to appear on the ballot** in the general election, but called for election reform regarding the rule.

“I also don’t think it should be necessary to publish someone’s deadname on the ballot,” he told The Buckeye Flame – using a term that often refers to a transgender person’s former legal name.

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work” for boards of elections across the state.

Both Creech and King offered remarks in support of the bill – neither of which mentioned transgender candidates, that they both faced transgender opponents or acknowledged Fischer’s call for reform.

SB 71 now awaits Gov. Mike DeWine’s signature. 🔥

### IGNITE ACTION

- To register to vote or to check your voter eligibility status in the state of Ohio, [click here](#).
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### Author



**H.L. COMERIATO (THEY/THEM)**

H.L. Comeriato is the staff writer for The Buckeye Flame. A queer and non-binary writer and reporter

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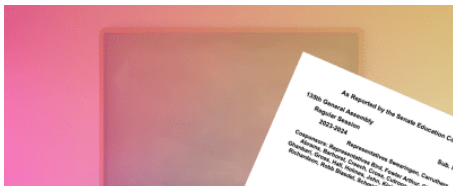
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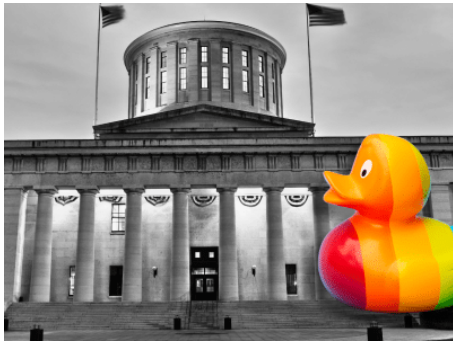
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