

Ohio Common Ground Anti-Capture Safeguards

Summary of Protections Built into the Founding Package

One of OCG's core design principles is that the organization must remain controlled by its members rather than political parties, candidates, donors, activists, or internal factions. Multiple layers of governance, transparency, and structural safeguards have been incorporated to make capture difficult and reversible.

1. Members Own the Organization

- One member, one vote.
- Voting authority ultimately rests with the membership.
- Members elect leadership.
- Members can amend governing documents.
- Members can recall directors and officers.
- Members can initiate policy and governance proposals through petition processes.

Purpose: Prevents permanent control by insiders.

2. No Party Control

OCG is expressly designed to be independent of both major parties.

- Not a Republican organization.
- Not a Democratic organization.
- Not controlled by any candidate.
- Not controlled by any elected official.

Leadership restrictions prohibit current party officers and candidates from serving in key leadership positions, and additional restrictions were contemplated to prevent party officials from dominating the Board altogether.

Purpose: Prevents OCG from becoming a front group for either party.

3. Diverse Board Structure

The Board was intentionally designed to prevent any single faction from taking control.

- Statewide elected directors.
- County-selected directors.
- Expert-appointed directors subject to confirmation.
- Geographic representation through county delegates.
- Professional expertise represented alongside grassroots membership.

Purpose: Makes coordinated takeover by a single interest group significantly more difficult.

4. Term Limits and Leadership Rotation

- Directors serve limited terms.
- Officers serve limited terms.
- No permanent leadership class is permitted.

Purpose: Prevents long-term institutional entrenchment.

5. County Balance Protections

Every county receives baseline representation, with additional delegates awarded based on membership growth. This prevents domination by a few large urban or suburban counties while still rewarding organizational success.

Purpose: Prevents geographic capture.

6. Member-Driven Issue Selection

Each year:

1. Members are surveyed.
2. Issues are ranked.
3. Organizational priorities are adopted from member input.

Purpose: Prevents leadership, donors, activists, or media narratives from dictating the agenda.

7. Transparency Requirements

The package includes requirements for:

- Financial reporting.
- Conflict-of-interest disclosures.
- Public governance information.
- Publication of major policies and methodologies.
- Donor transparency standards beyond legal minimums where practical.

Purpose: Makes hidden influence harder to conceal.

8. Scorecard and Research Integrity Rules

All accountability scorecards must:

- Use published criteria.
- Use documented sources.
- Publish methodology.
- Allow correction requests.
- Avoid unpublished standards.

Purpose: Prevents manipulation of ratings for political purposes.

9. Candidate-Endorsement Safeguards

The recommended model is:

- No candidate endorsements.
- Publish facts, scorecards, questionnaires, and voting records instead.

If endorsements are ever permitted, they must pass multiple approval gates involving the Board, convention delegates, and membership.

Purpose: Prevents transformation into another partisan political organization.

10. Governance & Integrity System

The Founding Package includes:

- Governance & Integrity Committee.
- Ombudsman function.
- Conflict-of-interest policies.
- Recall procedures.
- Member complaint mechanisms.
- Removal procedures for misconduct.

Purpose: Creates an internal check on leadership abuse.

11. Constitutional-Level Protections

Several foundational principles were designated as extraordinarily difficult to amend, including:

- Member ownership.
- Political independence.
- Transparency.
- County-based representation.
- Member-driven priorities.
- No individual control.

Changes require supermajority approvals through multiple bodies.

Purpose: Prevents future leaders from quietly rewriting the organization's mission.

12. Culture-Based Capture Prevention

Beyond governance, OCG's organizational philosophy emphasizes:

- Respectful disagreement.
- Rejection of ideological purity tests.
- Resistance to factionalism.
- Slow trust-building.
- Distributed leadership.
- Mission above personalities.

Purpose: Protects against the most common form of capture: internal factional takeover.

Bottom Line

OCG's anti-capture strategy does not rely on trusting future leaders to "do the right thing." It relies on a layered system of member ownership, distributed authority, transparency, term limits, constitutional safeguards, independent oversight, and difficult-to-amend structural protections designed to ensure that no party, candidate, donor, activist faction, or individual can easily take control of the organization.