



League of Women Voters of Toledo-Lucas County

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Dear Editor:

Proposed Ohio legislation, HB 194 and SB 148, approved in the House and Senate, substantially weakens the opportunity to vote in Ohio, in some cases destroying traditional safeguards long existing in the State. Three specific concerns are noteworthy:

Eliminating Poll-Workers' Requirement to Assist Voters: The bills eliminate the need for poll workers to direct voters to the correct voting table in multi-precinct polling locations. The voter is left to find his/her own way! The likely result is that honest but confused voters will be denied the right to vote. If the voter is in the right polling location but the wrong precinct table, a provisional ballot would not be counted.

Reducing Options for Absentee Voting: Although decade old reforms have increased voter turnout, the bills would roll back the clock by impairing early in-person absentee voting before Election Day. Moreover, local election boards will be barred from mailing absentee ballot applications to every voter in the county. The result is fewer voters.

Decreased Recognition of Voter Intent: Perhaps most disturbing is language in the bills refusing recognition of voter intent, when simple mistakes are made, even when the mistake is obvious. If a voter, for example, writes in the name of the same candidate he or she already voted for on the same ballot, the vote would not be counted at all, despite the obvious intent to vote for the candidate. Ohio has always used "intent of the voter" to determine whether a ballot could be counted, but if the proposed legislation passes that will no longer be the case.

In a democracy where voter turnout remains a national embarrassment, it is difficult to understand or accept efforts to suppress turnout as proposed by this legislation. Absentee access will be restricted and simple misinformation will be permitted to become a bar to the exercise of a constitutional right. The bills should be opposed with respect to these provisions. **CONCERNED VOTERS SHOULD CONTACT THEIR STATE LEGISLATORS** to highlight these issues and call for carefully crafted legislation that helps individuals exercise their right to vote.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Bishop and Peg Hull Smith, Co-Presidents
League of Women Voters Toledo-Lucas County