

## LWVO State House Day - March 7, 2017

### VOTING RIGHTS & ELECTIONS

*Peg Rosenfield, Elections Specialist*

Who knows what the legislature will do this year? With a veto-proof super-majority in both houses, a lame-duck Governor, all statewide offices up for grabs in 2018, and an unpredictable federal government, the political dynamics are weird and unprecedented. But we will continue to try to protect and improve voter access.

**Rigged?** The big elections controversy this last year was the bizarre and unfounded allegation that the 2016 election was somehow "rigged" and that "3 to 5 million illegal aliens voted in November." These accusations just demonstrate an appalling ignorance of election safeguards and procedures and an irresponsible attack on our most basic democratic right. So the League, with other advocates and election officials, pointed out all those safeguards, including voter registration confirmation requirements, Election Day procedures, security precautions, bipartisanship, and post-election audits using the voter-verifiable paper audit trail.

**Extended hours.** The most serious threat to voter access in the Ohio legislature was SB296 (2016), which would have severely restricted the ability of the courts to extend voting hours in case of an emergency. The League's Executive Director, Carrie Davis, presented detailed concerns and suggestions to both the senate and house committees. Although they were ignored by the legislature, the Governor evidently paid attention, and he vetoed the bill. Unfortunately, it may resurface.

*Updates from 2016*

- 1. On-line Voter Registration** was finally approved and became available on January 1, 2017. You must have an Ohio driver's license or state ID to use it, but we will continue to encourage its expansion to include other government agencies and other ID.
- 2. Electronic poll books** were approved and funded. Individual counties can now decide when they want to introduce them. After an initial learning curve, they will save money and reduce errors.
- 3. Statewide mailing of absentee ballot applications.** The Secretary of State (SOS) requested funding for the mailing for 2018 in the state budget. Since state law forbids any other government agency from sending these, voters will not receive this reminder unless the SOS sends it. LWVO presented testimony urging that the mailing be sent every year, since voters call and ask for it in odd-numbered-years; and we urged the legislature to allow voters to submit absentee applications online as well.

**TO DO:** Keep up to date with the testimony presented to legislative committees by checking the [www.lwvohio.org](http://www.lwvohio.org) web site and urge your state legislators to support policies advocated by LWVO.