

LWV Ohio Statehouse Day, March 31, 2015

LWVO Lobbyist Report, Election Law

Peg Rosenfield, Elections Specialist

Early indications are that the legislature has mostly finished for now imposing more restrictions on voting. There are recurring rumors that photo ID may be proposed again, but so far wiser heads have prevailed, especially when its costs are pointed out. A more serious threat may be a proposal to put into statute the Secretary of State's 2014 restrictions on the days and hours of early in-person voting to regular office hours, no evening hours or Sundays, and very limited Saturday hours.

The League would like to see serious consideration being given to several improvements in election administrative procedures:

1. **On-line voter registration**, which is supported by both Republicans and Democrats in other states and is supported by Secretary Husted. Changes of address, already allowed on line, should be expanded to include state agencies such as Job & Family Service, in addition to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, to empower those who do not have a driver's license.

2. **Electronic poll books**, which are already authorized by statute, should be funded by the state so that less affluent counties can acquire them. This will cut down on the use of provisional ballots and all the problems they create.

3. **Statewide mailing of absentee ballot applications** needs to be funded so the Secretary of State can continue to provide these to all registered voters in Ohio. Having enacted the prohibition against any other government official's sending them, the legislature has a responsibility to fund this service to voters dependably.

4. **Early voting access**. Having allowed the Secretary of State to restrict the days and hours of early in-person voting, the legislature should allow county Boards of Elections to offer additional in-person early voting locations, based on the population of the county.

5. **Voting centers?** A proposal to introduce voting centers in Ohio is being discussed by some election officials. These are similar to early in-person voting sites, in that they allow any voter to vote at any center in the county. But they are much fewer in number than precinct-based voting, and they offer some new challenges for voters. The League has no position on voting centers, but we are looking at them carefully to weigh the advantages and disadvantages.

Keep updated by checking the Ohio League web site at www.lwvohio.org for ongoing developments on these and other elections bills.