

## TESTIMONY ON OHIO VOTER ID LAW

Chairman and members of the Committee, it is an honor and privilege to address you today about Ohio's voter ID law.

By way of introduction, I have been a Board Member of the Lake County Board of Elections here in Ohio for a total of almost 20 years. I began serving with my first appointment in March of 1990, left in January of 1997 to serve as a County Commissioner and returned in 2002 where I have recently been appointed to another 4 year term that started this March 1<sup>st</sup>. I have had the privilege of serving under several Ohio Secretaries of State; Sherrod Brown, Bob Taft, Ken Blackwell, Jennifer Brunner, and now Jon Husted. I was also selected to serve as one of the two Ohio representatives to the Standards Board of the Federal Elections Assistance Commission as well as Ohio's Board of Voting Machine Examiners by former Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner. I still serve on the later board. Additionally, I have been involved with our bi-partisan Ohio Association of Elections Officials for many years in several capacities, and am the immediate past President of that organization which represents all Board Members, Directors, Deputy Directors, and staff of all 88 county Boards of Elections in Ohio.

Our current voter ID law, passed in 2006, requires only one of the following forms of identification when voting; a current & valid federal or state photo ID that contains the voters current address, a current utility bill or bank statement, a government check or paycheck or other government document. If the voter does not have any of these when voting, or they refuse to provide one, they will be allowed to cast a provisional ballot which allows the voter and the local Board of Elections to verify & validate the voters eligibility to have her/his ballot counted. Since this laws inception, election officials, election-day poll workers, and voters have become very comfortable with the law and appreciate it. Many voters now come to the table with their ID in hand ready to give to the poll worker. It is interesting to note that when this law first went into effect I was shocked at how many people approached me at civic and non-political meetings/events about the new requirements saying in essence, "It is about time." When I inquired further about their comment, most had felt that people were being allowed to vote who were not eligible in Ohio and thus took away their legitimate vote. We must always remember that our most important role as elections officials is upholding the integrity of the voting process. Nothing can be more important than that. We can never disenfranchise an eligible voters right to cast a ballot or abridge a voters rights by allowing a ballot to be counted that should not have been counted. We must always have the voters confidence that our results and our Elections system has not been compromised in any way. This law is about as liberal a voter ID law as one could be with everyone having access to a provisional ballot and every effort being made to have the voter cast a regular ballot.

(at this point I will give some examples of attempted voter fraud in Ohio)

I applaud our system and the people who work it every day here in Ohio. I have heard people say, or infer, that since we do not have any high profile cases of people trying to fraud the system by voting illegally on election day that we do not need a voter ID law or a better voter ID law. To that I say, thank an elections professional as they are the ones responsible for that outstanding result. However, we must have laws in place to allow them/us to protect the system as well as to prevent fraud from ever happening and to, once again, not disenfranchise the legitimate voter here in Ohio. We have insurance policies for healthcare, for our homes, our personal property, our vehicles, and even our life. We certainly do not get rid of them when we are healthy or when nothing has happened to our home, or since no one has taken or damaged our personal property, or because we have never had a car accident, or we have not yet died. Voter ID laws are our insurance for fair and honest elections. The better those laws can be, the more integrity we will have in the system. We certainly would not get rid of our military in a time of peace.

As this relates to Ohio's voter ID law, we certainly do not want to get rid of what is working or weaken it in any way and, in fact, I know some would like to see it stronger by adding the photo requirement that is not part of our current law. If this were to be done we would have to acknowledge the religious rights of our large Amish & Menonite communities as well as any others that forbid personal photographs. There is also the concern of those who do not have a need for a photo ID in any other aspect of their life, and the cost as well as the inconvenience of having to obtain one. Additionally, I have heard the arguments about College students whose photo ID does not have their current/voter registration address. These are all serious considerations that would have to be addressed. Currently you can't do much of anything in your normal, everyday life without a photo ID. I recently had to drop off an annual registration form at Cleveland City Hall for my business and had to show a photo ID before entering the building. When recently making a purchase at a store with a bank issued debit/credit card my wife had to show a photo ID. Also, I see now that when taking the ACT & SAT test(s) for college a student will be required to show a photo ID. This peaked my interest because during the Ohio Senate hearings on a proposed change to the voter ID law last year that I had the opportunity to sit in on, several of the opponents of photo ID were college students or advocates for college students stating that the requirement would be too prohibitive but now a high school student will be required to have a photo ID to take the college entrance exam(s).

Voting is a right, a privilege and a responsibility that we should all take very seriously. It is the essence of our democracy. Election officials, legislators and voters should fight every day to protect that right, that privilege and that responsibility with all the fervor we can muster, and we must help protect every voters rights as well as the integrity of the system so there is the utmost confidence that every election is fair and honest.

Once again Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, it has been an honor and a privilege to present this testimony today. I look forward to any questions or comments you might have for me.