



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF OHIO**

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LWVO Interested Party Testimony on  
HB 64 – State Budget  
House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education  
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Chairman Duffey, Ranking Member Ramos and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education, thank you for the opportunity to present interested party testimony on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Ohio (LWVO).

LWVO urges this committee to appropriate necessary funds to ensure a smooth election in 2016. We need to prepare now to make sure Ohio is ready for the next presidential election. If essential aspects of election administration are not funded, we are setting ourselves up for problems next year.

The League supports three measures that would aid election officials in the administration of high-turnout elections: an appropriation for the mailing of absentee ballot applications, providing electronic pollbooks for all county Boards of Elections, and online voter registration.

**Absentee Application Mailing**

We fully support the request made in testimony last week by Ohio Secretary of State Husted's office for an appropriation to continue sending absentee ballot applications to all registered voters. In the past, federal funds were used to cover such costs but those funds are no longer available. The League and other voter advocates were deeply concerned that this request was not in the initial budget and strongly urge the legislature to incorporate funding in the substitute bill.

The absentee mailing is critical to smooth election administration, because voting patterns in Ohio have changed in recent years. Since 2006 when absentee voting was opened to all voters, upwards of one-third of Ohio voters choose to cast their ballot before Election Day. Voters are accustomed to receiving their absentee application in the mail, and there would likely be confusion, delays, and increased problems if the mailing is not funded.

Last session, the legislature passed SB 205, a bill that prohibits local boards of elections or any government official other than the Secretary of State from sending absentee applications out to all voters. No one else can pick up this responsibility. SB 205 indicated that only the Secretary

may send the applications and that can happen only if the legislature appropriates funds. Many counties have consolidated precincts as a result of more voters casting early ballots. If the mailing doesn't happen next year, we will likely see a return to long lines at the polls.

### **Electronic Pollbooks**

LWVO also urges the legislature to make good on a second promise. Last session, the legislature passed SB 109 that created a process for certifying electronic pollbooks, but stopped short of providing needed funds for purchasing them.

E-pollbooks have numerous benefits, including making it easier to maintain updated and accurate records of voters who cast early ballots, providing poll workers a complete database so they can look up all voters and addresses, faster and more accurate voter check-in at the polls, and significant cost savings over printed lists. We urge the legislature to provide the \$15 million necessary to purchase electronic pollbooks statewide, so that every county has uniform access to this equipment.

### **Online Voter Registration**

Last but not least, we urge the legislature to not continue delaying approval of online voter registration. It is a bi-partisan concept whose time has come. It is more secure, convenient and accurate than traditional paper forms, and it will save taxpayer money.

LWVO believes that these three important measures will have a lasting positive impact on election administration in Ohio, and we urge the legislature to include them in Substitute HB 64.