

To: Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee  
From: Peg Rosenfield, Elections Specialist for the League of Women Voters of Ohio  
Date: February 15, 2012  
Re: Interested Party Testimony on SB 295

I am Peg Rosenfield, Elections Specialist for the League of Women Voters of Ohio.

We understand that the move to repeal HB 194 is “to provide clarity in advance of one of the largest-turnout elections Ohio will face in this decade”.<sup>i</sup> In actuality, whether or not HB 194 is repealed by the Legislature, it will not affect the 2012 election because HB 194 has been stayed until the voters have the opportunity to vote on its possible repeal in November.

However, if the underlying goal is both to provide clarity and to facilitate voting, we have an additional repeal to recommend. When Am Sub HB 224 was enacted very rapidly in July 2011 to expedite voting by uniformed service and overseas voters, the Legislature appended several provisions to clean up omissions made in HB 194. One of those provisions that was included eliminated early in-person absentee voting on the weekend before election day. This restriction was not even mentioned in the bill summary and many of us who were following HB 224 closely and supported its original intent, were unaware that this restriction had been inserted in the bill. Therefore, there was no opportunity for us to advise legislators about the pernicious effect these changes would have. The Saturday, Sunday, and Monday before election day are the days of heaviest absentee voting. Eliminating the opportunity for in-person absentee voting not only discourages early turnout, it helps relieve and prevent the kind of long lines on election day that embarrassed Ohio in 2004.

Therefore, we urge repeal of the changes in lines 863 and 864 of Sec. 3509.03(I) in Am Sub HB 224, thereby restoring in-person absentee voting on the three days immediately preceding Election Day.<sup>ii</sup> This will not only avoid confusion by retaining the ability of Boards of Election to provide early voting as existed in the past, it will encourage and support voter turnout, which must be a goal of all of us.

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<sup>i</sup> Senate President Tom Niehaus, R-New Richmond, quoted in *The Columbus Dispatch*, Thursday, February 9, 2012. (See Attachment A)

<sup>ii</sup> See Attachment B, a copy of page 28 of HB 224, showing the strike-through language eliminating weekend voting.