

LWV Ohio Statehouse Day, April 26, 2016

LWVO Lobbyist Report, Election Law

Peg Rosenfield, Elections Specialist

Once again, indications are that the legislature has mostly finished imposing more restrictions on voting - at least for now. There are still recurring rumors that photo ID may be proposed again, but so far wiser heads have again prevailed, especially when its costs are pointed out.

To update each of the five concerns about election law:

1. **Online voter registration**, which is supported by both Republicans and Democrats in other states and is supported by the Ohio Secretary of State. Changes of address, which are already allowed online, should be expanded to include state agencies such as Job & Family Services, in addition to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, to empower those who do not have a driver's license. We *testified* for this three separate times in **HB 64**, the state budget, plus once for a separate bill, **SB 63**. So far all to no avail. The Senate passed SB 63 last year, in June 2015, but the House continues to delay. There were three hearings in the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee back in January and nothing since. We are strongly urging the House to pass SB 63 in time for it to be in effect this fall.

2. **Electronic poll books** were, however, approved and will be available for all 88 counties, with the state paying 85% of the cost and each county paying 15% of its cost. Our hope is that this will cut down on the use of provisional ballots and all the problems they create.

3. **Statewide mailing of absentee ballot applications** has been funded in the state budget, HB 64, so the Secretary of State can provide these to all registered voters for the November 2016 General Election. Having prohibited any other government official's sending them, the legislature had a responsibility to fund this service to voters.

4. **Early voting access**. Two court cases overruled some of the Secretary of State's and legislature's restrictions on the number of days and hours of early in-person voting. One court ruling required early voting the Saturday, Sunday, and Monday before Election Day. The other case reached a settlement agreement that provides additional days and more hours, including guaranteed evening and weekend early voting, that will be in effect through the end of 2018.

5. **Voting centers** seemed to have dropped off the radar. If the subject resurfaces, we will keep you informed.

Continue to keep informed by checking the Ohio League web site at www.lwvohio.org for ongoing developments on these and other elections bills.