

Written testimony, providing data supporting funding of mailing absentee ballot applications

Norman Robbins, Research Director, Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates (NOVA)

March 24, 2015

**Re: Funding mailing of absentee vote-by-mail (VBM) applications to all voters in the next general election:**

1. In the 2012 Presidential election, nearly 1.3 million Ohioans utilized absentee VBM voting, amounting to 23% of total votes cast. Therefore, VBM is a major form of Ohio voting, and deserves financial support.
2. The utilization of VBM in 2012 varied by county from as little as 11% up to 35% of all votes cast, with several counties clearly dependent on mail-in in order to save considerable outlays by cutting the number of precincts. For instance, in the face of heavy (~50%) utilization of VBM in 2009 and 2010, Cuyahoga county cut 373 precincts between 2008 and 2012, saving \$2,174 per precinct per election (according to the Board's estimates). Adding together all the consolidations across the state, the net consolidation of 1689 precincts between 2008 and 2012, in part due to VBM, has saved nearly \$3,700,000 dollars, not even including lower costs for the purchase of voting machines and the greater efficiency and accuracy of bar-coded mailings. Therefore, supporting VBM applications to all voters is of great benefit to Ohio's county Boards of Election, both financially and in terms of efficiency.
3. There is marked diversity in the number of registered voters per precinct between different counties, ranging in 2012 from 331 to 1077. Without the benefit of VBM application mailings, there could be non-uniform crowding and confusion on election day in counties with high numbers of voters per precinct.