



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF OHIO**

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LWVO Interested Party Testimony on  
HB 64 – State Budget  
House Finance Committee  
Carrie Davis, LWVO Executive Director  
March 26, 2015

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Driehaus, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present interested party testimony on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Ohio (LWVO).

The League of Women Voters of Ohio fully supports an appropriation to continue sending absentee ballot applications to all registered voters, as requested by the Secretary of State and supported by the Ohio Association of Election Officials. The absentee mailing is critical to smooth election administration, because voting patterns in Ohio have changed since the advent of no fault absentee voting in 2006. Currently, upwards of one third or more Ohio voters choose to cast their ballot before Election Day. Not going to the polls on Election Day has become an increasingly popular option in rural and urban counties alike. With these changing voting patterns, voters are accustomed to receiving their absentee applications in the mail.

Here is a little history. In recent years various county Boards of Elections (BOEs) have increasingly relied on absentee voting as an effective election administration tool to avoid unnecessary delays and excessively long Election Day lines. This is a much more efficient approach as opposed to the more expensive options of more voting machines or the cost of additional precincts. In fact, many Ohio BOEs have taken advantage of this trend to consolidate precincts. Since 2008, Ohio has roughly 2000 fewer precincts with an annual cost savings of nearly \$4.4 million, without counting the costs of the voting machines for those precincts.

The county BOEs achieved these costs savings by reminding registered voters to take advantage of early voting options through mailing absentee voter application requests forms to all registered voters. With the passage of SB 205 last session, local BOEs were prohibited from sending out absentee ballot application mailings, and no government official other than the Secretary of State can send these applications to all voters. SB 205 further specified that the Secretary could continue sending absentee applications statewide only if the money is appropriated by the legislature.

We submit that if the money is not appropriated for this mailing the recently established voting patterns in Ohio will likely be disrupted causing confusion, delays, and longer than necessary lines at the polls. The Secretary of State's Office said in its subcommittee testimony that this

mailing "not only ensures that all eligible voters can conveniently vote without ever leaving home, but it helps ensure a smoother Election Day." Isn't this what we all want for Ohio?

We urge you to support the amendment requested by the Secretary of State and county election officials for an appropriation for the 2016 absentee ballot application mailing to Ohio's registered voters.

In addition, we wish to express our thanks to members of this Committee who have supported our joint request with the Ohio Association of Election Officials for an amendment to appropriate funds for BOEs to purchase electronic pollbooks. Together, the continued mailing of absentee ballot applications and modernizing poll books will help BOEs reduce expenses and provide a smooth Election Day.

Thank you for your attention, and we will be happy to answer any questions.