



TO: House Finance and Appropriations Committee

FROM: Lisa Wurm, Policy Manager, ACLU of Ohio

DATE: April 17, 2015

RE: Secretary of State funding request –absentee ballot applications

To Chairman Smith, Ranking Minority Member Driehaus, and members of the House Finance and Appropriations Committee, my name is Lisa Wurm, policy manager for the American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio (ACLU of Ohio). I appear today to endorse Secretary of State Husted's recent request for \$1.2 million to send absentee ballot applications to registered voters throughout Ohio.

The ACLU of Ohio hopes this committee seriously considers and approves his request as increased access to voting in Ohio is not, and should not be framed, as a partisan issue. Voters of all political parties - as well as our 88 bipartisan county boards of election - greatly benefit from any measures that make voting simpler and more available.

Undoubtedly, there are those who are skeptical of such a request and wonder why the State of Ohio should spend any money to facilitate voting in this manner. Many of these people remember when Election Day was a single day and early absentee voting applied only to those in the military and a few other select categories.

However, we should not let memories of the past stand in the way of the present time when voters have advocated for and become accustomed to popular measures such as the one before us today. The people of Ohio have clearly made their voices heard through their actions.

Indeed, while the November 2014 elections produced historic low voter turnout in our state, 864,562 Ohioans voted early with 83% doing so by mail. This is an increase over 2010 election numbers and, thankfully, also led to a decrease in the number of voters who cast a ballot provisionally, a welcome outcome. In addition, the amount of money requested by Secretary Husted to accomplish the task of sending absentee ballot applications is modest in a state with our resources. Especially when considering the costs of increased provisional voting, unacceptably long lines at polling places, and a system that has adjusted to the increases in early voting by reducing polling places across the state.

Members of this committee, we support Secretary Husted's efforts in this regard and ask you to do the same. Thank you for your time.

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