

Testimony of Rita Rome and Barbara Friedman Yaksic
Co-Chairs of Promote the Vote, Protect the Vote
National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section
Supporting SB 191
Which Would Permit On-line Process for Applying for Absent Voters' Ballots
Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee
November 30, 2020

Chair Coley, Vice-Chair Huffman, Ranking Minority Member Craig and the entire Government and Oversight and Reform Committee, our names are Rita Rome and Barbara Friedman Yaksic. We are co-chairs of Promote the Vote, Protect the Vote for National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), Cleveland Section.

NCJW is a 125-year-old organization that has 180,000 members and supporters across the country and over 2,000 members and supporters in Ohio. Our mission is dedicated to improving the quality of life for women, children and families while safeguarding individual rights and freedoms.

We are writing to you to ask your support for SB 191, which would authorize the Secretary of State to establish a secure online process for applying to vote by absent voter's ballots. Although we have assisted citizens to register and to vote for many years, this year of the COVID Pandemic presented challenges like none other.

Some voters were not even given the chance to cast a ballot as tens of thousands of Ohio voters had their paper absentee ballot applications rejected because of simple errors.

Our Cuyahoga County Board of Elections worked to reach out to their nearly 10,000 voters whose applications were rejected. After a mailed notice of the rejections, our county board tried fervently to keep up with calling those voters.

They reached out to us, coalition volunteers, to make the needed phone calls. And we did, but too late for many to vote by mail. We hate to see anyone need to choose between not casting their ballot or jeopardizing their health by voting in person.

If on-line Application to Vote by Mail were available, mistakes could be remedied more quickly, more cheaply, and delays in communication would not be an issue.

Let's strengthen our Democracy by removing stumbling blocks to our ability to vote.

Thank you for your consideration to pass this important legislation out of your committee.