



6815 Euclid Avenue  
Cleveland, OH 44103  
(216)702-3034  
[mike@allvotingislocal.org](mailto:mike@allvotingislocal.org)

TO: House State and Local Government Committee

FROM: Mike Brickner, Ohio State Director, All Voting is Local

DATE: May 22, 2019

RE: Senate Bill 22

To Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Ginter, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, my name is Mike Brickner, Ohio State Director for All Voting is Local, and I submit to you interested party testimony on Senate Bill 22 (SB22).

All Voting is Local<sup>1</sup> launched in 2018 as a collaborative campaign housed at The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. In Ohio, our campaign has worked on key initiatives, including coordinating nonpartisan election protection for voters; providing public education to voters with disabilities on their rights; and recruiting poll workers to ensure elections run smoothly. In the November 2018 general election, we recruited approximately 3,000 individuals nationwide to sign up to be poll workers, with nearly 450 volunteers in Ohio alone.

Long lines became synonymous with Ohio in the early 2000s after elections where voters waited as long as 12 or 14 hours to cast a ballot. Reforms such as the use of no-fault absentee voting, the introduction of electronic poll books, and the use of Election Administration Plans have all helped to minimize long lines--but not eliminate them entirely. A critical shortage of poll workers threatens our democracy. Reducing the minimum number of poll workers could lead to a resurgence of long lines and voter frustration, pushing Ohio backward.

### **Estimating long lines and wait times**

Long lines to the polls are a major obstacle to a free, fair election system. To ensure every eligible voter can access the ballot, polling places must be staffed with ample trained poll workers. Voters should wait no longer than 30 minutes to cast their ballot,<sup>2</sup> according to a 2014 report from the bipartisan Presidential Commission on Election Administration (PCEA). Long lines can discourage voters from casting their ballot, especially if they have jobs with inflexible schedules, childcare needs, and/or disabilities.

---

<sup>1</sup> More information is available at [www.allvotingislocal.org](http://www.allvotingislocal.org)

<sup>2</sup> Available at: <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/the-presidential-commission-on-election-administration/>

The number of poll workers is directly tied to the number of check-in stations that are provided, as each electronic poll book needs at least one person operating it. Additionally, fewer poll workers would mean less capacity to assist voters with disabilities, first-time voters, and those who experience technology issues while casting their ballot.

The Election Administration Commission (EAC) strongly recommends election officials use a [tool created by social scientists at Caltech and MIT](#) to predict wait times on Election Day. It takes into account the number of voters; the number of check-in stations operated by poll workers; the number of voting machines; the amount of time it takes voters to check-in; and, the amount of time it takes voters to cast their ballot.

Attached are screenshots of projected lines at a polling location--Northwest Chapel in Dublin, in Franklin County. It serves five precincts, and utilizes electronic poll books. On Election Day 2016, voters cast 3,412 ballots throughout all five precincts. Assuming that election officials provide five check-in stations--or one per precinct, 36 voting machines, and it only takes voters 90 seconds to check-in and five minutes to vote, there would be considerable long lines at the end of the day. By 6:30 p.m. on Election Day, the tool estimates that voters would wait an average of 3.8 hours to check-in and to vote. To illustrate the sensitivity of this tool, adding a sixth check-in station while keeping all other factors the same would reduce the wait time to 104 minutes at 6:30 p.m. Eight check-in stations reduces the 6:30 p.m. wait time to 30 minutes.

Long lines to vote are dangerous for our democracy. Resources such as the MIT/Caltech tool can help election officials plan, and should be incorporated into the EAPs that officials are required by the Secretary of State to produce. And as the tool makes clear, reductions in the number of poll workers staffing a polling location can cause long lines.

### **New technology and high voter turnout**

The 2020 election will introduce new voting technology -- to voters and poll workers alike. Many counties will debut the new equipment in 2019, but with low voter turnout expected, many voters will see this equipment for the first time in the 2020 presidential election, when turnout is expected to be high. Additionally, poll workers may be less familiar with the new technology, and it could take longer to troubleshoot issues. If the average amount of time to cast a ballot increases because voters are less familiar with new machines, it could lead to an increase in wait times.

Additionally, voters with disabilities often need additional assistance to cast a ballot. Curbside voting is available in Ohio, but if fewer poll workers are available, voters with disabilities will struggle to access it. Many counties are also debuting new voting machines for people with disabilities, which requires time and assistance from poll workers. Reducing the number of poll workers in a presidential election year, where new voting machines will be implemented, is a recipe for problems on Election Day. In fact, we would recommend that in anticipation of higher turnout and new technology, counties increase their number of poll workers, not decrease them.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend the following changes:

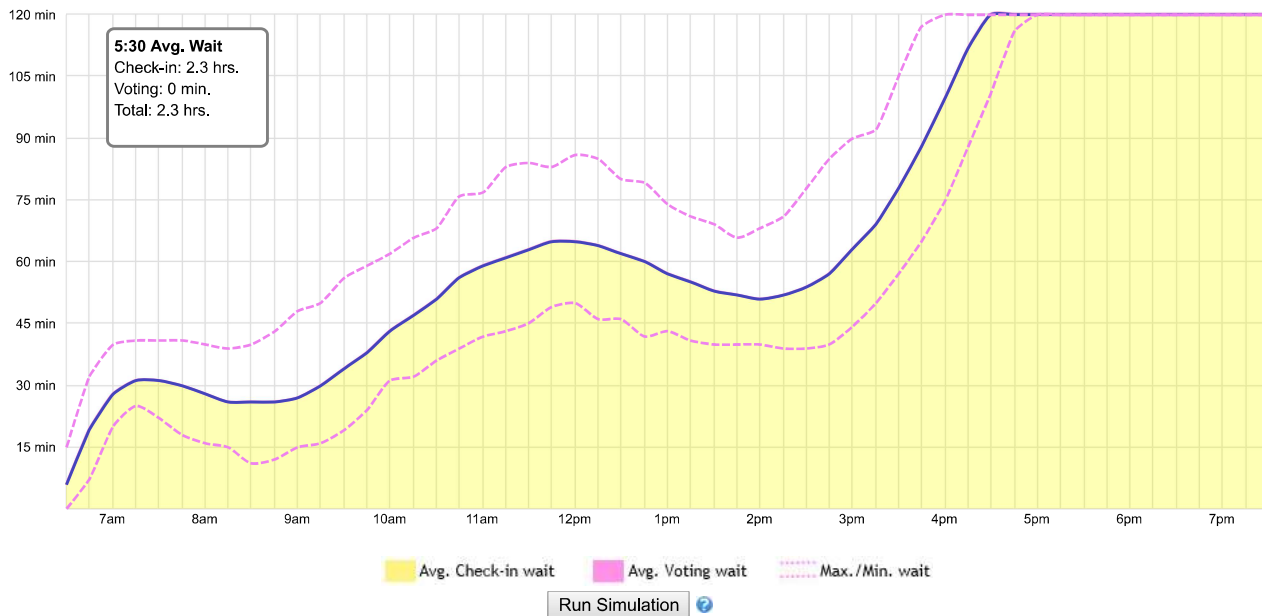
- Affirmatively require by law the use of Election Administration Plans for all boards of elections, and mandate that staffing guidelines are determined through data-driven tools.
- Proactively affirm in state law that voters should not wait longer than 30 minutes to cast a ballot, and provide mechanisms in Ohio law to require elections officials to address problems if voters wait longer than 30 minutes. If wait times exceed 30 minutes in consecutive elections, the Secretary of State should intervene.
- Require unanimous consent of all board of elections members in order to reduce the number of poll workers.
- Allow for split shifts for poll workers in order to increase the pool of available workers.
- Allow people with past criminal convictions unrelated to elections to serve as poll workers.
- Shift the state holiday of Columbus Day/Indigenous Peoples' Day to Election Day, and incentivize state workers to serve as poll workers by offering an additional day of vacation for any volunteer.
- Allow 16-year-olds to serve as poll workers.
- Require poll workers to receive intensive training on how to operate and troubleshoot accessible voting technology, in order to ensure voters with disabilities are able to autonomously and conveniently cast their ballot.

Reductions in the number of poll workers may create unnecessary obstacles to the ballot. We encourage legislators to pursue reforms that will make it easier to recruit poll workers, and ensure elections are properly staffed.

# Line Optimization

[Load Precinct Data](#) [Download Current Data](#) [Help](#)

Expected voters  Check-in stations  Voting stations  Poll is open  to



Avg. Minutes to check in:     Avg. Min. to vote:   
 Arrival pattern:     Early arrivals:  %    Cannot check-in:  %  
 Same-day Registration     Scanner Lines     Simulate walk-offs

+ Show simulation settings

[Close Calculator and return to main page](#)   
 [View Instructional Videos](#)

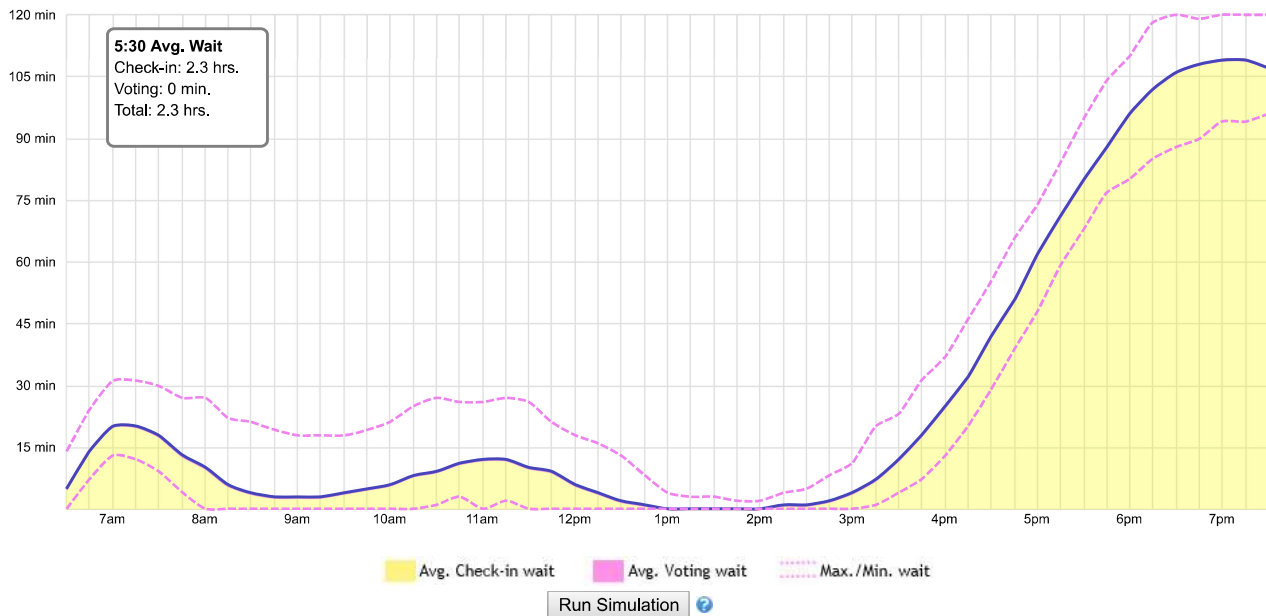
## Instructional Videos

Part 1

# Line Optimization

Load Precinct Data [?](#) Download Current Data [?](#) [Help](#)

Expected voters  Check-in stations  Voting stations  Poll is open  to



Avg. Minutes to check in:  Avg. Min. to vote:

Arrival pattern:  [?](#) Early arrivals:  % [?](#) Cannot check-in:  % [?](#)

Same-day Registration  Scanner Lines  Simulate walk-offs

+ Show simulation settings

[Close Calculator and return to main page](#) [View Instructional Videos](#)

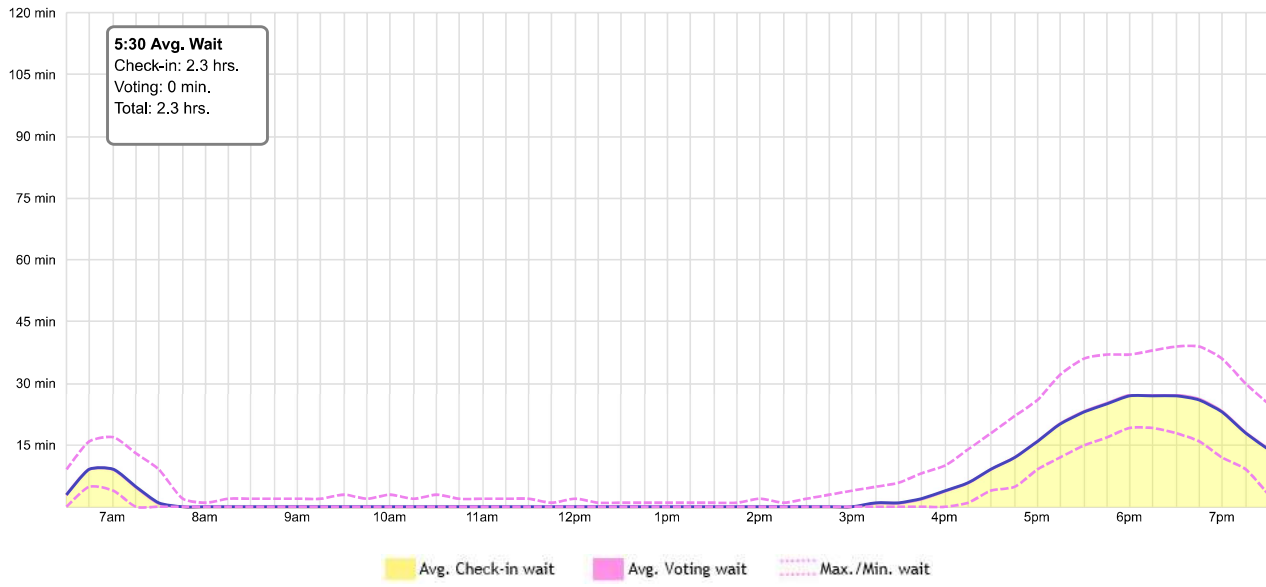
## Instructional Videos

Part 1

# Line Optimization

[Load Precinct Data](#) [Download Current Data](#) [Help](#)

Expected voters  Check-in stations  Voting stations  Poll is open  to



[Run Simulation](#)

Avg. Minutes to check in:     Avg. Min. to vote:   
 Arrival pattern:     Early arrivals:  %    Cannot check-in:  %  
 Same-day Registration     Scanner Lines     Simulate walk-offs

+ Show simulation settings

[Close Calculator and return to main page](#)   
 [View Instructional Videos](#)

## Instructional Videos

Part 1