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SENATE TAKES ACTION TO IMPROVE INTEGRITY OF OHIO ELECTIONS

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Senate took action today to improve the integrity and accountability of Ohio’s election system with the passage of a landmark voting reform bill.

“It’s time that Ohioans had a presidential election in this state that doesn’t turn into a partisan shouting match over the voting process,” said Senate President Tom Niehaus (R-New Richmond). “We’re about to become the center of the political universe again, and we’re taking this action well in advance of the 2012 election to ensure that Ohio’s system is fair, honest and completely accessible to qualified voters. These commonsense reforms are essential to restoring public confidence in the legitimacy of our elections.”

Senate Bill 148, sponsored by State Senator Mark Wagoner (R-Toledo), would do the following:

- Create a secure system allowing Ohioans to register and change their voting address online, cutting paperwork costs for local boards of elections and increasing convenience for voters who need to update their personal information.
- Make critical improvements to Ohio’s statewide voter database, creating a data-sharing agreement with other state agencies, as well as other states, to develop a more centralized and accurate record of voters.
- Establish uniform statewide standards for absentee and early voting, setting the window for absentee voting at 21 days prior to Election Day by mail and 16 days in-person prior to Election Day (with the exception of Sundays, the three days prior to Election Day and military early voting, which remains at 45 days prior to the election).
- Adopt new guidelines to improve the casting and counting of provisional ballots, which are used by voters who fail to meet certain eligibility requirements.

“These reforms are long overdue,” said Senator Wagoner. “It’s time to take advantage of 21st century technology to improve the operation of Ohio’s elections. I’m confident that these changes will provide much-needed uniformity among our 88 counties and allow us to use modern tools to access information and data to ensure a current and reliable election system.”

The bill now moves to the Ohio House of Representatives for further consideration.