



THE OHIO SENATE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

PRESS RELEASE

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Senate Democrats Oppose Deeply Flawed Election Reform Bill

Columbus – All the members of the Ohio Senate Democratic Caucus today voted against SB 148—a deeply flawed election reform bill that will suppress voter turnout. The partisan legislation slashes early voting from 35 days to just 11, puts Ohioan’s personal information at risk and imposes new restrictions that will lead to voter confusion.

“There are provisions in this bill that turn back the hands of time by suppressing voting opportunities while at the same time eliminating the protection of voter’s privacy,” said Senator Shirley Smith (D-Cleveland), the Assistant Minority Leader.

SB 148 requires voters who use their Social Security numbers as identification on ballots and registration forms to use all nine digits rather than the last four digits, as required by current law. During committee testimony, the League of Women Voters called this provision unnecessary, while the ACLU and other voter advocates criticized it for being an invasion of privacy that could lead to identity theft.

“This bill opens our voters personal information; it will suppress the vote and works to disenfranchise the voters,” said Senator Charleta B. Tavares (D-Columbus). “SB 148 takes us backwards and will reduce the numbers of eligible voters who can and will participate in the electoral process.”

The legislation also prohibits counties from mailing unsolicited absentee voting applications—something that larger counties have done to successfully avoid long lines on election day. This one size fits all provision of SB 148 reduces the rules for absentee voting to the lowest common denominator.

“We should work to create an elections environment that promotes access and opportunity,” said Senator Nina Turner (D-Cleveland). “All Ohioans regardless of ethnicity, religion, sexual-orientation or class should be assured the unfettered right to vote.”

Senate Democrats also objected to SB 148 because it will likely lead to election-day confusion if voters are not sufficiently informed of the changes before they go to the polls. However, Democratic amendments to add voter education requirements to the bill were rejected by the Senate's Republican majority.