

House GOP Election Law Changes (HB 194)

Overview of Primary Concerns

PARTISAN BILL WILL CREATE PROBLEMS DOWN THE ROAD

The best way to make lasting election law changes and avoid contentious pre-election litigation is through consensus and bipartisan support. Currently, there is no bipartisan consensus on HB 194 and various compromise amendments have been rejected.

PRIMARY CONCERNS

Restricts Voting Opportunities

- Dramatically reduces In-Person Early Voting from 35 days to 6 days
- Prohibits In-Person Early Voting during busiest 3 days of early voting (Sat/Sun/Mon before Election Day)
- Limits In-Person Early Voting to just one Saturday
- Prohibits In-Person early Voting on Sundays
- Cuts mail-in voting from 35 days to 21 days making it harder to receive and return a ballot in time
- Implements more aggressive registration purging without adequate assurances that qualified voters are not being removed from the rolls

Needlessly Disqualifies Eligible Votes

- Requires that votes be thrown out if every single field – including non-essential fields – are not completed for a provisional or absentee ballot request form.
- Throws out ballots where voter choice is clear, such as when a voter fills in the oval by a candidate's name and also writes in the same name. There were 12,207 of these in 2008.
- Instead of finding a solution to prevent poll workers from misdirecting voters to the wrong precinct, this bill removes the current requirement that poll workers assist voters in finding the correct voting precinct.
- Increases the number of provisional ballots, which are less likely to be properly counted, by eliminating the requirement that poll workers will be required to direct voters to their correct precinct and by prohibiting poll workers from helping voters complete forms.

Eliminates Local Control

- Boards of elections would be forced to comply with a one-size-fits-all rule, which means:
- NO setting up satellite locations for early voting that are more accessible unless 3 of 4 members approve
- NO setting early vote hours that make sense for their county
- NO mailing of absentee ballot request forms to all registered voters to shorten election day lines and add convenience for busy working voters as well as elderly voters
- NO paying for postage for ballot return to ensure voters complete voting process

BACKGROUND BY THE NUMBERS

- **10,187** wrong precinct ballots cast mostly due to poll worker error that were not counted in 2008 (Ohio Secretary of State's website)
- **10%** Probability that a provisional ballot will not count. This risk will likely get higher under this bill (based on 2010 midterm elections)
- **3** Ohio's ranking as a top state for throwing out wrong precinct ballots (EAC 2008 Survey)
- **12,207** Votes from 2008 with clear choices that would be rejected under HB 194 (Ohio Secretary of State's website)
- **1,226** Precincts eliminated from 2008 to 2010 during explosion in early voting (Ohio Secretary of State's website)
- **3** Ohio's ranking as one of the states with the highest number of provisional ballots (EAC 2008 Survey)
- **204,651** Provisional ballots cast in the 2008 presidential election (EAC 2008 Survey)
- **5** Ohio's ranking for throwing out people's ballots because the voter is supposedly not registered (EAC 2008 Survey)
- **4** Ohio's ranking as a top state for REJECTED provisional ballots (EAC 2008 Survey)