



## OHIO SENATE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

June 9, 2016

The Honorable John R. Kasich  
Governor, State of Ohio  
77 South High Street, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Governor Kasich:

We, the Senate Democratic Caucus, write to urge you to veto Senate Bill 296. This bill would greatly burden the ability of Ohio citizens to keep polling locations open when unexpected problems – such as voting machine failures or power outages – prevent them from voting on Election Day.

S.B. 296 requires Ohioans to post a bond to keep polling places open past scheduled hours on Election Day. This requirement bases the right to vote, in part, on the wealth of the voter. It will allow rich Ohioans to keep polls open in wealthy districts, because they will have the ability to post the required bonds.

A special provision in the bill allows the poorest Ohioans to have the bond waived. However, in that instance, only the person requesting the extension would be allowed to vote past regular hours. The poorest Ohioans won't be able to keep the polls open for their neighbors.

Perhaps even more troubling is the fact that most middle class Ohioans won't be able to keep the polls open at all. Middle class Ohioans will likely be too poor to afford the bond and too rich to have it waived. Average citizens will be left out in the cold.

The bottom line is this: if S.B. 296 becomes law, very few Ohioans will have the money – and therefore the option – to ask a court to correct for polling place errors that robbed them of the right to vote.

In addition to the discriminatory financial burden S.B. 296 places on Ohio voters, it also significantly raises the level of evidence needed for a judge to order the polls to stay open. The standard it sets makes it almost impossible to succeed in the required time frame.

To make matters worse, S.B. 296 also strikes an enormous imbalance between the state and voters. It creates a special panel to hear only the state's appeal of court decisions to extend polling hours. However, if a court denies voters an extension of polling hours, the special panel would *not* hear voter appeals of that decision. This drastic imbalance stacks the deck against average Ohioans in favor of state power. It is inherently unfair, and likely unconstitutional.

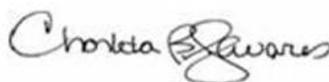
In the past two weeks, federal judges have struck down two major Ohio laws regarding access to the ballot box. According to expert testimony we heard in committee, S.B. 296 would likely suffer the same fate. Signing S.B. 296 into law would only reinforce the negative national news coverage our state has received on this crucial issue.

We join the Ohio League of Women Voters, the American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio, the Ohio Voter Rights Coalition, and many prominent voter rights advocates in strongly opposing this bill. Please take a strong public stance against voter suppression in Ohio and veto Senate Bill 296.

Sincerely,



Senator Joe Schiavoni  
Senate Minority Leader  
33<sup>rd</sup> Senate District



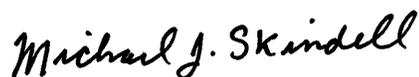
Senator Charleta B. Tavares  
Assistant Senate Minority Leader  
15<sup>th</sup> Senate District



Senator Edna Brown  
Senate Minority Whip  
11<sup>th</sup> Senate District



Senator Lou Gentile  
Assistant Senate Minority Whip  
30<sup>th</sup> Senate District



Senator Michael J. Skindell  
Member of the Senate Civil Justice Committee  
23<sup>rd</sup> Senate District



Senator Cecil Thomas  
Member of the Senate Civil Justice Committee  
9<sup>th</sup> Senate District



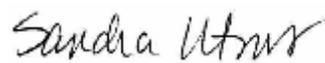
Senator Tom Sawyer  
28<sup>th</sup> Senate District



Senator Capri S. Cafaro  
32<sup>nd</sup> Senate District



Senator Kenny Yuko  
25<sup>th</sup> Senate District



Senator Sandra Williams  
21<sup>st</sup> Senate District