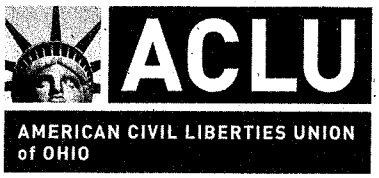

TO: Senate State & Local Government & Veterans Affairs Committee

FROM: Carrie L. Davis, Staff Attorney, ACLU of Ohio

DATE: April 22, 2008

RE: HB 350 – Proponent Testimony

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Senators:

My name is Carrie Davis. I am the Staff Attorney and Legislative Counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio ("ACLU of Ohio"), the Ohio Affiliate of the ACLU, the oldest and largest civil liberties organization in the world with over 500,000 members nationwide and nearly 30,000 members and supporters across Ohio. The ACLU and ACLU of Ohio are non-profit, non-partisan membership organizations devoted to protecting basic civil rights and civil liberties for all Americans and all Ohioans.

The ACLU of Ohio supports the Student Poll Worker Program and encourages its expansion through HB 350.

Creation of the Student Poll Worker Program last session, through Representative Wolpert's 126th Session HB 234, has been a remarkable success. It helps ease the shortage of poll workers in some counties and encourages young people to participate in elections.

Here is one example of a high school student's experience working the polls:

> "My name is Jonathan Lykes, I'm a 17 year old senior at Shaw High School, and I was a student poll worker in the primary election and the general election in 2007.
>
> "The experience was a merging of three generations. The first being a woman that had been a poll worker for the last 50 years. She taught me all the tradition of the elections. I taught her how the new technology works. I also worked with a man that was a 35 year old accountant. In my poll work at the general elections in 2007 I got to work with another high school student.
>
> "My best experience was seeing a couple bring their children to the polls. It was nice to see them teaching their offspring one of the most important lessons for a person to learn in America. The voice that we have through

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our vote is something that needs to be taught to youth all across the nation. Being a poll worker taught me that our system of popular sovereignty is important and still credible. I learned the security measures taken to assure that the votes are protected. I learned that the system can be trusted. Finally, I learned that if we don't vote, we will have no voice. I will be 18 in 2008 and I am excited about voting in the presidential election."

The ACLU of Ohio works with students and teachers across the state, encouraging them to take an active role in civic life. From the inception of the Student Poll Worker Program, the ACLU of Ohio has encouraged students to take advantage of the opportunity. We advertise the program on our website and through mailings to ACLU members, we sent letters to all 88 county Boards of Elections encouraging them to recruit student poll workers, we distributed pamphlets about the Student Poll Worker Program at the fall 2007 conference of the Ohio Center for Law Related Education (OCLRE), and we sent information to social studies teachers statewide encouraging them to get their students involved.

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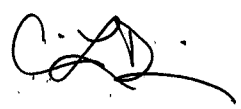
Many teachers and guidance counselors enthusiastically commend their students to be poll workers. Both teachers and students alike find the experience enriching.

HB 350 will expand on the successful beginnings of HB 234 last session. It will permit a second high school student to serve in larger precincts with six or more poll workers. It will also permit college students to serve as poll workers either in their home counties or in the counties where they go to school.

The last two years have shown us that the Student Poll Worker Program benefits everyone – fills the need for poll workers, increases the number of computer-savvy young people working the polls, and encourages the next generation to be engaged in the electoral process.

For all of these reasons, the ACLU of Ohio encourages this Committee to expand the Student Poll Worker Program and vote for HB 350.

Respectfully submitted,



Carrie L. Davis
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