

# ACLU of Ohio Executive Summary

## Voting Rights Press Conference



**Promote civic involvement and encourage more citizens to serve as poll workers.** Dedicated poll workers are the front line when administering an election. Their decisions on Election Day make the difference between voting and denial of voting.

- Poll workers should have adequate training, resources and support on Election Day.
- Shorter shifts. One way to alleviate the stress of poll workers is to divide the thirteen-hour day into shifts, thus making shorter hours for poll workers.
- Communication. The ACLU of Ohio heard complaints from poll workers that the local Board of Elections' phone line was not working and poll workers could not get through with questions or to report problems. Access to the Board of Elections is critical to poll workers.
- Encourage greater participation of youth serving as poll workers, to learn from and support more experienced workers.

**Ease congestion at polls on Election Day by encouraging early voting.**

- Voting early should be easy, but unfortunately many encountered problems with early voting in 2006. The ACLU of Ohio received calls from people who visited Boards of Elections to vote early and were told the machines weren't working or waited 40 minutes or longer.
- The ACLU of Ohio suggests that the Secretary of State support efforts to make early voting more convenient. For example, require local Boards of Elections to have early voting procedures in place, such as having working voting machines and ballots available for early voters.

**Ease voter confusion over voting in the proper polling place and precinct.**

- Boards of Elections could have more than one precinct at a polling location, to ease voter confusion over where to go.
- Poll workers should not force a person to vote a provisional ballot when their correct precinct is only a few feet away.

- Poll workers should be aware that memory cards can be used on any of the machines, in the event that one precinct has long lines or a machine malfunctions.

**Ensure voters are able to cast an absentee ballot.**

Absentee voting must be handled with greater care. The ACLU of Ohio received complaints that generally fell into three categories:

- People who requested an absentee ballot never received one
- The application for an absentee ballot was returned due to insufficient identification
- The ballot was mailed to the voter's registered address, rather than where they asked the ballot to be mailed. Many times this happened too close to Election Day for the voter to send another request. This affects students, military service members serving abroad, the elderly and disabled people. Local Boards of Elections should respond in a timely and appropriate manner to requests for absentee ballots.

**Alleviate confusion over identification**

**requirements.** Clarification of identification requirements should come from the Secretary of State's office to provide uniformity among Ohio's 88 counties. The ACLU of Ohio received numerous calls from people who were asked to leave the polls to get other identification or were forced to vote a provisional ballot.

Often, questions focused on whether identification had to have a picture or whether a driver's license needs a current address. Poll workers should know what ID is acceptable. What the law says and what is practiced at the polls should not be different.