



August 15, 2006

Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell
Borden Building
180 East Broad Street
Columbus, OH 43215

Honorable Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell,

Following last Tuesday's special election, it is clear that there is still confusion among poll workers and elections officials about the new voter identification law. As a result, according to news reports, some Ohio voters cast provisional ballots when they should have been able to vote on regular ballots. We are aware of the memorandum sent from Judy Grady two weeks ago to county elections officials, but it is clear that more needs to be done to ensure that county elections officials and the poll workers under their supervision are implementing the new voter identification requirements in accordance with the law.

It is imperative that your office issue a directive to county elections officials clarifying that voters with old addresses on current driver's licenses can cast a regular ballot, well before elections officials' September 9, 2006 deadline to send notices of changes to voters. We welcome the opportunity to work with your office to ensure that the directive be as voter-friendly as possible.

Last week, the Columbus Dispatch reported one such incident of poll workers' confusion around the new rules involving Reynoldsburg resident Alex Jarman. Jarman had to cast a provisional ballot when the address on his driver's license didn't match the address poll workers had on file for him. The Akron Beacon Journal reported that Stark County Elections Director Jeffrey Matthews said there was confusion about the rule during the special election. Matthews said provisional ballots were cast most commonly when voters' addresses on their driver's license didn't match that of their registration.

Unfortunately, some Ohioans' votes may not count due to unclear information that was disseminated to county board of elections officials. Fortunately, however, there is still time for you to clarify the rules for Ohio voters. We ask that you include civil rights and civic participation organizations, whose members are affected by the new law, in the process of making sure that voters have the most user-friendly interpretation of the new rules. Our hope is that we share the same goal in getting all eligible Ohio voters out to the polls, and having their votes counted.

While it does appear that there were not widespread problems during Tuesday's special election, it is not altogether surprising given the low turnout and the propensity for voters who vote in special elections to be more informed of their rights as voters. The November mid-term elections will bring out significantly more voters than this recent special election. Ohioans simply cannot afford for you to get it wrong again. If you do, Secretary Blackwell, Ohio voters are in trouble.

Sincerely,

Shaun Tucker
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