



December 19, 2019

Secretary of State Frank LaRose
180 E. Broad Street
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: Franklin County Board of Elections Funding for Voter Education

Dear Secretary LaRose,

We write to you regarding the recent tie vote by the Franklin County Board of Elections on whether to accept funding from the county commissioners for voter education. Our organizations ask that you break this tie vote in favor of voters who will need credible information about their right to vote during the hectic 2020 presidential election.

Voters across Franklin County look to the Board of Elections to provide accurate, nonpartisan information about their rights. Without it, voters are left in the dark about information critical to ensuring their voices are heard in our democracy. Media coverage of the election might seem ubiquitous, but this coverage often focuses on the candidates and issues on the ballot—not the dates and times of early voting, what identification one must bring to the polls, or how to locate one's polling place. In an age where many citizens receive information from dubious news sources, the voice of the Board of Elections as a credible and accurate source of information is even more critical.

Franklin County voters also have a demonstrated need for more education. An analysis of statewide data from the 2018 general election found that¹:

- Voters in Franklin County cast more provisional ballots compared to other large counties in Ohio.
- Voters in predominantly Black communities were **more than twice** as likely to cast a provisional ballot than mostly-white communities.
- Voters in poor communities were nearly **four times** more likely to cast a provisional ballot than more affluent areas.
- Young voters were nearly **five times** more likely to cast a provisional ballot than communities with older voters.
- Over **one in five** rejected provisional ballots statewide came from Franklin County.
- Nearly **two-thirds** of all provisional ballots statewide rejected due to a mismatched signature are from Franklin County.

¹ All Voting is Local, *Rejected: How the Provisional Ballot System in Franklin County, Ohio Fails Voters*, retrieved December 18, 2019, https://allvotingislocal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2019_AVL-OH_Franklin-Co-Provisional-Ballot-Report.pdf.

- Voters who cast a provisional ballot because of insufficient ID or because they are in the wrong location may have their ballots rejected. Franklin County made up **one-third** of the total number of ballots rejected statewide for these reasons.

These unique challenges demonstrate that Franklin County voters would benefit greatly from voter education that focuses on deadlines for registration, how voters may locate their correct polling location, and the appropriate identification they need to bring to the polls.

Educating voters on how to cast a ballot is not partisan--it is central to election officials' duties. We urge you to decide this matter to protect the voting rights of Franklin County voters.

Please feel free to contact us by phone at (614)378-3041 or email at camille@ohvoice.org should you have any questions or need more information.

Sincerely,

Camille Wimbish
Election Administration Director
Ohio Voter Rights Coalition

J. Bennett Guess
Executive Director
ACLU of Ohio

Mike Brickner
Ohio State Director
All Voting is Local

Khaled Salehi
Ohio State Director
America Votes

Catherine Turcer
Executive Director
Common Cause Ohio

Usjid Hameed
Government Affairs and Legislative Director
CAIR, Columbus Chapter

Robert M. Brandon
President & CEO
Fair Elections Center

Barb Hykes
President
League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Columbus

Nicki Bloch
President
National Council of Jewish Women, Columbus

Lisa Gaynier
President
Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates

Prentiss Haney
Executive Director
Ohio Student Association

Daniel Ortiz
Outreach Director
Policy Matters Ohio