



# 2025 All Voting Pro-Voter Agenda: Ohio

Our Vision for the Future of Voting in the Buckeye State

**All Voting is Local Ohio**

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# Introduction

In many ways, Ohio has become a testing ground for regressive anti-voter policies. Over the last two decades, Ohio has experienced a significant erosion of voting rights, which has accelerated since 2020 with the enactment of numerous legislative restrictions involving drop boxes, early voting, and strict photo ID requirements, among other election-related processes. Many of these restrictions have been emulated and copied in other states.

However, Ohioans are clear about the value of their vote, and they're willing to fight for it. In 2023, when legislators attempted to strip Ohioans of their ability to pass citizen-led ballot initiatives, a diverse, bipartisan citizen coalition soundly defeated this power grab at the ballot, and Ohioans remain active and engaged in the fight over their state's future.

Since our country's founding, the structure of our democracy has been intentionally designed—and actively maintained—to exclude people from participating fully, especially people of color and other marginalized communities. At All Voting is Local, our guiding principle is a democracy that brings people in, rather than one built on the notion that people should be kept out—bold by design, as we aim to transform the systems that govern our democracy to include everyone. This commitment to building an inclusive, accessible, and equitable democracy drives both our long-term vision and our day-to-day work.

That's why we've launched All Voting is Local's National and State Pro-Voter Agendas—a long-term affirmative vision for voting that calls on state and local election officials to use the broad authority they already have to expand access to the ballot. The Pro-Voter Agenda was created as a tool to be implemented by those

decision-makers while centering Black, Brown, Native American, and other historically marginalized communities.

Our agenda outlines actionable solutions to ensure the following:

- Every American can get on the rolls and stay on the rolls.
- Every American can vote when, where, and how it works for them—in under 30 minutes.
- Partisan interference in vote counting and certification is stopped.

The path forward requires vigilance and action. We must resist anti-voter laws, support election officials (and push back on them when necessary), and advocate for policies that make it easier—not harder—for every voter to participate in our democracy. The stakes couldn't be higher. The fight for voting rights is not a relic of the past—it's a fight for our future.

The power of American democracy lies in the hands of the people—and the officials who are responsible for ensuring the voice of the people is heard through free and fair elections. As

All Voting continues advocating for policies that expand access to the ballot, this agenda will serve to clearly and accurately define our positions and our priorities—across our eight states and across the country.

*—Hannah Fried, Executive Director, All Voting is Local (Spring 2025)*



# Who We Are

All Voting is Local (“All Voting”) is a nonpartisan organization that fights on the ground in eight states for free and fair elections. In a moment of unprecedented threat to our democracy, All Voting advocates state and local officials for policies and practices that ensure the American people choose their leaders, not the other way around.

All Voting works year-round with our partners to prevent partisan interference in our elections, advance fair and inclusive rules on voter registration, and remove barriers that make it more difficult for people to vote—particularly for Black, Brown, Native American, and other historically marginalized communities. As a multistate organization with a national presence and resources, we build connections between state and national advocacy groups so that local voices and perspectives inform the national conversation around voter access.

All Voting is Local is on the ground in Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. During the 2024 cycle, All Voting programs expanded access for over 13 million voters.

# Voter Registration Practices & Policies

Every American can get on the rolls & stay on the rolls

## Automatic Voter Registration (AVR)

All Voting OH believes in easy and accessible voter registration options, available by mail, online, or in person, through all federal, state, and local government agencies, including the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV). Eligible voters should be automatically included in the state's registration rolls whenever they conduct a qualified transaction, known as "front-end" AVR, at a federal, state, or local government office, unless they affirmatively request to opt out. This provides a quick and easy way to register voters proactively.

Currently, Ohio voters who have moved or changed their name but haven't updated their voter registration may need to use provisional ballots. (Note: If they have proof of the name change with them at the polls, they are exempt). Back-end systems that use data from the BMV to verify or update voter registration can be helpful. However, discrepancies between data at the BMV and BOE should not result in additional barriers for voters. Provisional ballots should not be required just because a voter's information is not updated at the BMV.

## Same-Day Voter Registration

All Voting OH believes that voters should be able to update their registration information and/or register at any time, while allowing the option to vote in person at the polls during early voting or on election day. Voters should be able to do so

without additional ID requirements, provided they affirm their identity and place of residence by signature. Voters should not be required to register at their local election offices and then return to the polling place to vote, as that unnecessary burden would lead to voter attrition.

## **Responsible List Maintenance**

All Voting OH supports responsible voter list maintenance done well in advance of an election and in alignment with the requirements of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA). Responsible list maintenance requires that jurisdictions take into account all relevant information that might indicate that a voter's eligibility has changed and notify voters of those changes before any actions are taken to remove eligibility. Appropriate list maintenance ensures that voters receive accurate information about voting, such as where to vote and who is on their ballot, and it can protect voters from challenges to their eligibility by a third party.

Boards of Election should not rely on third-party mass voter challenges to assist in maintaining their voter lists. Third-party data is notoriously unreliable and should not be relied upon as a substitute for trusted government systems.

# Voting Methods, Opportunities, & Policies

Every American can vote when, where, & how it works for them—in under 30 minutes

## Expanded Language Access

All Voting OH believes every voter should have equitable access to the polls, regardless of the language they speak. Consistent with the Voting Rights Act, if a jurisdiction reaches a threshold of 5% or 10,000 people speaking a covered primary language other than English, election officials are required to provide voter education and translation of the voting process without delay. We believe that individuals with both limited English proficiency and/or the inability to read or write should also receive additional levels of support, separate from expanded language access, through accessibility provisions that allow for telephonic and other forms of assistance, which are not currently provided uniformly throughout the voting process. Speaking a language other than English or not having proficiency in English should not be a barrier to voting. Support should be provided or accessible for voters where there is a need for language assistance.

## Use of Paper Ballots

All Voting OH believes that a paper record of each ballot ensures the most reliable and replicable election results. Hand-marked paper ballots are the best method for recording votes, securing our elections, and accurately reflecting the will of the voters in every race. Paper ballots are widely recognized by experts as one of the most important election security measures that states can adopt. All Voting is Local

supports the availability of ballot marking devices or other tools so that all voters, regardless of physical ability, can cast their ballots privately and independently. When selections are recorded on paper, voters can easily verify that their ballot accurately reflects their choices. Paper ballots also facilitate post-election risk-limiting audits, where election workers can check the paper records against electronic vote totals to confirm that voting machines are working as intended. All polling locations that use electronic voting machines should be required to have a supply of backup paper ballots, amounting to 20% of voters in each precinct, in case of a technological issue with their machines.

### **Expanded Access for Voters With Disabilities**

All Voting OH supports ample and accessible opportunities for everyone to register and/or vote, regardless of physical ability. The assistance provided for in-person registration options and the designated voting and/or registering locations must comply with the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). The Americans with Disabilities Act, the Voting Rights Act, and other federal laws have provided important protections for accessible voting and can be strengthened and built upon with policies, including but not limited to these:

- Wherever applicable, online registration and election websites should meet accessibility standards to help voters with disabilities find the information they need to register.
- The Help America Vote Act's (HAVA) requirement for one accessible voting machine at each voting location is the bare minimum. Election offices should be aware of the needs in their community and make plans accordingly to ensure that voters who need to use accessible voting machines do not experience longer wait times or greater burdens than other voters.
- Voting sites should be pretested for potential barriers that may affect voters with disabilities.
- Increased training for poll workers on voting with a disability should be provided to ensure that voters with disabilities are permitted to have privacy

while voting and are allowed to bring an authorized person to assist them in the voting process.

- Barriers to voting by mail should be reduced by allowing caretakers, family members, or other individuals to assist with and return ballots without overly burdensome requirements. Individuals assisting with ballot return should be able to use drop boxes and any other methods that support an efficient return of ballots outside of regular business hours.

## Early Voting

All Voting OH believes that early, in-person voting should include weekend and before- and after-work-hour availability during the month of early voting to ensure voters have ample opportunity to participate in our democracy without sacrificing their other responsibilities, such as jobs and childcare. Multiple weekends of early voting will also lessen the traffic and burden on the final weekend of early voting. Voters should have multiple options for voting early in person across their communities—such as at locations near workplaces, recreation centers, educational institutions, and places of worship—to ensure their vote can be cast conveniently.

## Voting by Mail

All Voting OH believes all voters should be able to vote by mail to ensure voters have ample opportunity to vote in a manner that is safe and accessible for them. A robust vote-by-mail program will include the following:

- Voters should be allowed to return completed ballots through accessible and secure methods. This may include returning their ballot in person to election officials, at a drop box or voting location, by mail, or through delivery by a family member, household member, or other third party. Voters should be allowed to request an absentee ballot by mail with ease. They should not require an excuse, and there should be no requirements for a witness, notary, or other secondary proof of signature to apply for a vote-by-mail ballot.

- Drop boxes should be available at various locations throughout the county, such as near schools, post offices, city buildings, and other public facilities.
- Election offices should be required to mail a vote-by-mail ballot within two days of receipt of the ballot request.
- A vote-by-mail policy should include strong opportunities to amend any errors on a ballot (i.e., to “cure” the ballot).
- Voters should be able to track their ballot through an election office-provided service.
- Voters should have the option to “spoil” their ballot if they choose to vote in person (early or on election day) instead, rather than being required to use a provisional ballot.
- Election offices should provide pre-paid postage for ballots.
- Election offices should accept and count ballots that have been postmarked by Election Day, rather than the day before or any date earlier than Election Day.
- Election offices should count ballots that arrive within a reasonable time after Election Day, allowing for delays in the mail. The current four-day deadline does not provide sufficient time for timely postmarked ballots to arrive.

### Equitable Voting Access for Justice-Impacted Voters

All Voting OH believes all current or formerly incarcerated individuals should retain their right to register and vote. While jailed or incarcerated, voters should have access to accurate and up-to-date information on upcoming elections, voter registration processes, methods for obtaining a ballot, and access to voting. All Voting supports voting by mail from jail, as well as the placement of polling locations in detention centers and the dissemination of voting guides and poll books inside of jails for direct use by people currently incarcerated and those administering the voting methods. We also recommend designating jails as voter registration agencies under the National Voter Registration Act. Upon entering custody, we suggest providing voter registration and allowing incarcerated persons to copy their relevant ID numbers, which they can include in any future voter registration paperwork. All Voting believes all eligible citizens should remain enfranchised voters regardless of

whether they are or have been incarcerated. Formerly incarcerated individuals should not lose their voter registration status or ability to vote due to a criminal conviction.

## Accessible and Well-Resourced Voting Locations

All Voting OH believes all voters should be able to easily access and cast a ballot in person at an early voting site, an election day polling location, or a vote center. Election offices should establish standards to ensure they have adequate and accessible voting locations, parking, signage, provisional ballots, machines, and poll workers to administer their elections smoothly and support voters, including those with disabilities. This will require continued assessment. Additionally:

- Voters should be able to cast their ballot within 30 minutes of arriving at their voting location.
- Voting locations should be accessible by public transit (where available).
- An estimated 21.3 million eligible voters have a disability that affects mobility. Voting locations should be accessible to all voters and free of impediments that may make it difficult for them to access the ballot.
- Voting locations should offer curbside voting and include adequate equipment and support for voters with disabilities. Administrators should, at a minimum, comply with federal law, which requires at least one accessible machine at each polling place.

## Expanded Voter Identification Options

All Voting OH supports states' using a variety of different methods to verify a voter's identity at the time of registration and/or voting, and the elimination of a photo ID requirement altogether, requiring only Help America Vote Act-style documentation at the time of registration, if ever. All Voting OH supports repealing Ohio's strict voter ID bill, HB 458, altogether. Our study reveals that obtaining a Voter ID is prohibitively expensive for many voters. A total of 36 states, including Ohio, have laws that require

or request voters to show some form of identification at the polls. The remaining 14 states and Washington, D.C., employ alternative methods to verify voter identities. Most frequently, other identifying information provided at the polling place, such as address verification, is checked against information on file. When voting by mail, a voter should not be required to photocopy and submit their ID with a completed ballot; rather, election administrators should verify signatures on ballot envelopes against those on registration records. If ID is required, All Voting supports only those expanded ID options that include forms of non-photo ID, such as a bank statement, utility bill, or lease.

### **Protections for Voters**

All Voting OH believes all voters should feel comfortable when casting a ballot via whatever method they choose and be able to do so free from intimidation. Federal regulations, such as the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act of 1965, protect against intimidation. States can enforce and strengthen these regulations to ensure that all voters feel safe, whether they are putting their ballot in a drop box or going to a voting site. Election offices should enforce and strengthen regulations that protect voters from intimidation by poll watchers, state and local law enforcement, or anti-democracy groups.

Voters should also be protected from unwarranted challenges to their eligibility, and if removed from the rolls, should be given ample notice and enough time to reregister ahead of any upcoming elections. The influx of citizen-led mass voter challenges is part of a widespread effort to undermine confidence in elections. These challenges are being used to bog down local election offices with a high volume of erroneous challenges to voters' eligibility, and they divert resources and valuable time from election officials.

### **Election Official and Election Worker Protections**

All Voting OH believes that since we entrust election officials to uphold our democratic systems, they should, in turn, be able to trust that they can do so safely and without fear, intimidation, or threats of violence. In recent years, election officials, staff, and poll workers have been subjected to threats, accusations of crime, and leaked private information (doxing) at historically high rates. As a result, some states, including Ohio, have enacted or are exploring legislation specifically to protect election officials, staff, and poll workers.

## Provisional Voting

Provisional ballots serve as an essential safeguard to ensure no one is wrongly turned away from the polls. All Voting OH supports the use of provisional ballots to check a voter's registration if their information is inaccessible or inaccurate at the polling location. However, provisional ballots should only be used as a last resort, as they are prone to technical or user errors that can result in disenfranchisement for qualified voters. Ohio's provisional ballot form, 12-B, specifically should be redesigned for a friendlier voter experience. The form should indicate what information is required for a ballot to be counted. In addition, typo errors like transposing birth dates should not result in the disqualification of the ballot. Voters should also be given ample time to cure their ballots after the election and should receive clear, written instructions on how to do so. Poll workers should also receive additional training on handling provisional ballots, as small errors can have serious consequences.

# Vote Count & Post-Vote Procedures

## Partisan Interference in Vote Counting & Certification is Stopped

### Notice & Opportunity to Cure

All Voting OH believes in a robust notice-and-cure program that gives voters at least eight days from the time an error on a ballot is discovered and they are notified to cure the issue. This process should also provide the same amount of time for a voter to provide identification that would allow a provisional ballot to be counted as a normal vote. The term “cure” refers to the process of fixing or remedying the perceived error(s) on a ballot.

We support the following:

- Requiring election officials to notify voters within two days of reviewing the ballot if any discrepancies exist.
- Requiring election officials to contact voters by phone, text, email, and mail within two days of identifying any errors on their ballot.
- After a voter is successfully notified, allowing voters up to three weeks (and no less than eight days) to fix any perceived error.
- Election offices specifying the documentation required to correct the error and the deadline for submitting it, to avoid delays in certification.

### Certification as a Ministerial Duty

Certification—the written statement attesting that the tabulation and canvassing of the election is complete and accurate—must be completed in accordance with the

process and timelines set out in federal and state law. The powers of state officials in the certification process must be clearly defined and limited, and those responsible for certifying federal elections should not be allowed to rely on any information other than the election returns themselves. The job of a state official reviewing election returns for certification is to make sure the math is correct and nothing more. A state official who fails to abide by their duty should be subject to immediate removal and other penalties as applicable under state law.

# Conclusion

All Voting is Local believes that the policies laid out in this Pro-Voter Agenda are a powerful step toward a thriving democracy that enfranchises voters in local, state, and federal elections. These measures—from automatic voter registration to expanded language access to additional ways to vote in person—foster inclusivity, accessibility, and representation, empowering citizens to actively participate in our electoral processes for a more equitable American democracy. We believe that these policies go beyond just the 2026 and 2028 elections and that there is still more work to be done for our country to truly achieve a democracy that works for us all. Our Pro-Voter Agenda is a milestone in advancing a better future for voters that is absolutely within reach, enfranchising millions and moving our country forward.