ALL VOTING OHIO

THE STATE OF PROVISIONAL BALLOTS IN OHIO POST-HB 458

THESE ARE VOTERS WHO WENT THROUGH THE TROUBLE OF REGISTERING AND SHOWING UP TO VOTE, BUT WERE ULTIMATELY NOT ABLE TO MAKE THEIR VOICES HEARD.

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Since the signing of House Bill 458 (HB 458) into law in January of 2023, All Voting is Local has closely followed and analyzed the bill's impact on provisional ballot rejection rates. The bill, which was an amalgam of many anti-voter policies, was noted as implementing one of the strictest voter ID laws in the nation due in part to the limitation of the number of acceptable IDs usable on election day it imposed. Post HB 458, voters are now required to use a state issued driver's license or state ID, U.S. passport, or military ID. **Many other forms of identification that were once acceptable, such as bank statements and utility bills, are now banned from being utilized to prove voter identity while voting.**

Provisional ballots are the ballot of last resort in Ohio. If a voter arrives at their polling location without the proper ID, they are given a provisional ballot and told to bring their ID to their County Board of Elections within four days to confirm their identity in order for their ballot to be counted. If they do not bring their ID within that time frame, their ballot is rejected.

Provisional ballot rejection rates are a key indicator of the reasons Ohioans were not able to vote. Before 2023, lack of proper ID at the polls was a rare occurrence. The numbers below point to the increase in voters who attempted to cast their ballots - and may very well have met all eligibility requirements - but simply lacked one of the ID forms required under Ohio's new law. In other words, these are voters who went through the trouble of registering and showing up to vote, but were ultimately not able to make their voices heard.

The Analysis:

The AVL data team calculated the percentage of rejected provisional ballots in Ohio for every year from 2018 to 2022 to get an average to compare against the 2023 numbers.

The Results:

Year	No ID Provided %
2018	5.5%
2019	8.5%
2020	5.0%
2021	8.8%
2022	8.2%
2023	28.4%
Overall Average: 10.8%	

In the November 2023 election alone, the percentage of provisional ballots rejected due to lack of identification jumped up to 28.4%, over 20 points higher than the year prior.

The numbers are clear: there has been a substantial increase in provisional ballots being rejected due to voters being unable to comply with the new voter ID law. In the five years prior to 2023, during each year's November elections, the percentage of provisional rejections due to lack of identification fluctuated between five and nine percent, with an average of 5.94%. The impact of this new law is being felt across the entire state, impacting counties large and small, urban and rural. For instance, in small Muskingum County, 86% of their 242 provisional ballots were rejected due to the lack of ID. Across Ohio's three largest counties by population, 693 total ballots were rejected for lack of ID, accounting for just over 18% of the rejected ballots in those counties. Additionally, it's important to note that 2023 was not even a major election cycle, raising concerns about the number of rejected provisional ballots increasing during the 2024 cycle.

We conclude that HB 458 has had a profound effect on the acceptance of provisional ballots in the state of Ohio and election officials should be prepared to handle an influx of voter ID issues heading into a presidential election cycle. While 2023 elections experienced unusually high rates of turnout due to special elections and contentious ballot measures, 2024 will certainly see even greater turnout. We can expect that more voters will be unaware of Ohio's new strict ID law. Therefore, before Election Day in November, it is incumbent upon the Secretary of State's office to increase funding for election officials to engage in robust public education at community events and through local and social media channels about how to comply with the current voter ID requirements and for election officials to increase poll worker training on guiding voters with ID challenges on how to cast a provisional ballot that will count.