



***Sent via electronic mail***

The Honorable Frank LaRose  
Secretary Of State  
180 E. Broad St. 16th Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

August 18, 2020

Dear Secretary LaRose,

As legislators, it is our job to make policy for the state of Ohio. And it is your job to run elections in this state.<sup>1</sup> Part of our duty is also to advocate for the needs of our constituents as the pandemic continues and the challenges for our election increase. We have done our job and we now ask that you do yours. Laws are in place and our citizens need you to take it from here.

Statutes are not scripts for the daily functioning of an executive office. They direct you in your work to provide services to the citizens. However, the directives that you are authorized and required to issue are supposed to provide for the detailed administration of elections and all the activities necessary to carry them out. That's why you have issued a 443-page manual for election officials made up of your directives.

We did not pass a law requiring you to go on a craft brewery voter outreach tour. We did not pass a law requiring you to purge infrequent voters. But you have used discretion and found authority for the things you want to do. We ask you to use that same spirit to expand voting access during this pandemic. Use your existing authority to do outreach in Black communities, pay return postage, stop blocking multiple secure drop boxes, allow electronic application for absentee ballots, and more.

Mr. Secretary, we are very concerned with how your office has handled recent events.

***Drop Boxes***

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<sup>1</sup> ORC 3501.05 (B-C) "The secretary of state shall do all of the following: ... (B) Issue instructions by directives and advisories in accordance with section 3501.053 of the Revised Code to members of the boards as to the proper methods of conducting elections. (C) Prepare rules and instructions for the conduct of elections"

You held a press conference Wednesday, August 12th to announce you had decided to limit drop boxes to one per county. You said the only drop boxes Ohioans need are the “blue mailboxes” on America’s streets. You left out that you learned from the Postal Service one week earlier, that they were going to have trouble handling our state’s election mail. You left out that just one block from your office, right in the center of downtown Columbus, those blue mailboxes were being unbolted from the street and hauled away. You knew from the primary election that changes in mail processing were impacting the flow of ballots to boards of elections. And now we learn that sorting machines have been dismantled and removed from Ohio’s mail processing plants. We struggle to understand why, knowing all of that, you would make it harder for voters to return their ballots.

### *Voter Purge*

You recently sent another voter purge order to the county boards of elections with less than 90 days to go before a presidential election with the purge to take place in December. Now is the time to be registering voters, not scaring them. You often say that state law requires the purge of infrequent voters, when that is not in fact a part of Ohio’s voter roll maintenance law. It is a discretionary policy created by the secretary’s office by directive. You could and should rescind it, stick to the National Change of Address process, and remove only those people who have moved out of state. We need you to be an honest dealer. We can disagree on policy, but you do not get to have your own alternative facts.


### *Paying Postage*

You asked for and received approval from the Controlling Board on June 15, over two months ago, to spend the CARES Act money in Ohio on eligible election expenses. The U.S. Election Assistance Commission issued guidance that postage was an allowable expense under the federal Covid-19 relief law. But since that time, you have continued to say you need Controlling Board approval to pay return postage for applications and ballots. What more do you need? We are still waiting to see your spending plan for the CARES Act money and we urge you to prioritize paying return postage.


These are just a few red flags that have us concerned about this election. The challenges are not going away. We are not going to give up. We will continue to demand solutions and honest answers for our constituents. Where any obstacle pops up, we will come up with solutions and we need you to do the same. Our constituents do not want to hear you passing the buck, claiming your hands are tied. While your party’s super-majorities in the legislature are indeed having trouble getting along and getting much done, that’s just a convenient scapegoat. You already have the authority you need to make this election work. Follow Dr. Amy Acton’s “swiss cheese” approach to a crisis. That involves applying layer after layer of solutions until all of the holes are covered and we have the best election plan possible.

To that end, included with this letter is our checklist for what your office can and must do. It was compiled from the suggestions of experts, advocates, and our many concerned constituents. They have the right to vote safely and securely with a guarantee that their vote will count. We will keep checking back with you on this list. Thank you for your prompt attention to these matters.

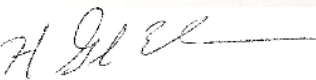
Sincerely,


  
Leader Emilia Strong Sykes  
District 34

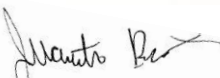
  
Assistant Minority Leader Kristin Boggs  
District 18


  
Minority Whip Paula Hicks-Hudson  
District 44

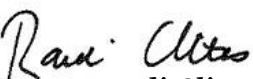
  
Assistant Minority Whip Richard Brown  
District 20


  
Rep. Gil Blair  
District 63


  
Rep. Janine Boyd  
District 9


  
Rep. Juanita Brent  
District 12


  
Rep. Jack Cera  
District 96

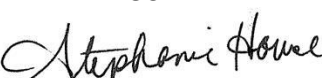
  
Rep. Randi Clites  
District 75


  
Rep. Erica Crawley  
District 26

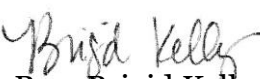
  
Rep. Jeff Crossman  
District 15

  
Rep. Sedrick Denson  
District 33

  
Rep. Tavia Galonski  
District 35

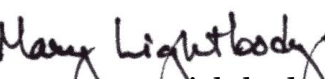
  
Rep. Stephanie Howse  
District 11

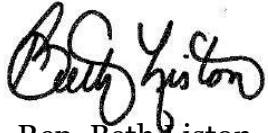
  
Rep. Catherine Ingram  
District 32

  
Rep. Brigid Kelly  
District 31

  
Rep. David Leland  
District 22

  
Rep. Michele Lepore-Hagan  
District 58

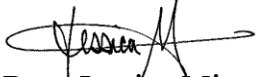
  
Rep. Mary Lightbody  
District 19



Rep. Beth Liston  
District 21



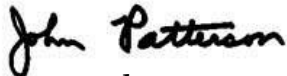
Rep. Joe Miller  
District 56



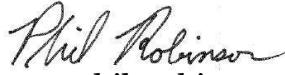
Rep. Jessica Miranda  
District 28



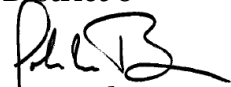
Rep. Michael O'Brien  
District 64



Rep. John Patterson  
District 99



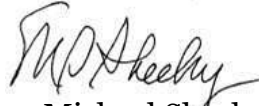
Rep. Phil Robinson  
District 6



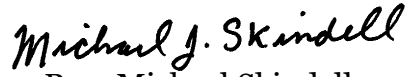
Rep. John Rogers  
District 60



Rep. Allison Russo  
District 24



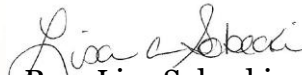
Rep. Michael Sheehy  
District 46



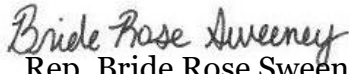
Rep. Michael Skindell  
District 13



Rep. Kent Smith  
District 8



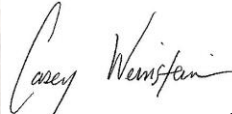
Rep. Lisa Sobecki  
District 45



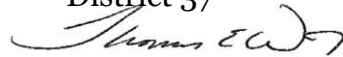
Rep. Bride Rose Sweeney  
District 14



Rep. Terrence Upchurch  
District 10



Rep. Casey Weinstein  
District 37



Rep. Thomas West  
District 49

en: "CHECKLIST: Representatives Requests of Secretary LaRose for Ohio's 2020 Election"