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Bride Rose Sweeney
State Representative

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November 3, 2023

Secretary Frank LaRose
Office of the Ohio Secretary of State
Sent via Electronic Mail

Dear Secretary LaRose:

We write to follow up on our concerns with your voter purge practices, especially the recent purge that took place during voting for the November election. We believe it's possible that significant errors were made and that the purge was not uniform and nondiscriminatory as required by federal law. Therefore, it should be reversed at least until after the November 7th election. Ohioans deserve assurances of what will happen to ballots cast by any voters you purged who show up to vote in the November 7th election. Finally, we want to know what you're doing to improve operations in your office as there seems to be a lack of understanding of basic voting processes.

Errors in the purge

Our preliminary analysis shows that **some of the people who were just purged are in fact active and voted in a recent election**. Voting should have taken them off the purge list and kept them on the rolls. This finding alone is reason enough to reverse the purge, take a more thorough look at the list, and only remove those who have truly become ineligible to vote in Ohio—and to do so only after the November 7th election.

What will happen to purged voters who try to vote?

The following statement from your office was reported on Tuesday, October 31: "If the voter heads to the polls to vote, it reactivates their registration. They are not shut out of the process." Are you stating that these purged voters' provisional ballots will be counted? The "APRI exception" that you referenced came out of a legal settlement allowing purged voters' ballots to be counted from 2018 to 2022. This was not in place for the August election. Are you saying that this or something similar will be in place for the November 7th election? If that is the case, Ohio voters need to know and you have a responsibility to send a directive to Boards of Elections enabling them to do that. I believe that every eligible vote should be counted.

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Misinformation from the Secretary's office

In addition, there seems to be a misunderstanding of voting basics in your office. In the letter your office sent on October 24 as well as the materials hastily posted on your website, there were several concerning misstatements about how voter registration and voter roll maintenance work:

1. The letter asserted that voters who move are no longer legally voters. This is simply incorrect. In fact, the letter cites the very state statute that contains **Ohio's Portable Voter Registration Law which protects the registrations of voters who move**. ORC 3503.16 provides that voters who move from anywhere within Ohio can vote in person at the location for where they live now and update their address at the same time right through Election Day.
2. The letter claims that the federal NVRA disallows purges in the 30 days before state elections. In fact, neither federal nor state law contain such a provision. But states, including Ohio, have generally observed the 90-day, no-purge rule set out for federal elections by the NVRA. This seems to be the first time voter purging has been done in Ohio while voting is happening.
3. The letter claims that when voters move and register at a new address, they do not cancel their old registration at their former address. In fact, county election officials do remove the former registration when adding a voter to their rolls as a matter of course. There simply are not large numbers of duplicate registrations on our rolls. It is a rare case where the former registration stays on the rolls. We look forward to seeing your data showing why each voter was purged.
4. The FAQ and Timeline documents your office posted after we inquired about the recent purge contain similar misstatements to those listed above. The election date is misstated as November 8th when the election is actually going to be held on November 7th. This still needs to be corrected. See [here](#).

You also posted a public [statement](#) on October 31st accusing critics of the purge of wanting deceased voters to remain on the rolls. That's not only hysterical and hyperbolic, that's just plain false. We want ineligible voters to be removed and eligible voters to remain on the rolls. While Ohioans under age 45 make up less than 7% of those who die annually in our state, that same age group makes up roughly 55% of your purged voter list. That means it's very unlikely that the people you purged are mostly deceased. Can you clarify the intentions of your statement?

You also stated that voters on the purged list moved. People who move within Ohio are still eligible to vote, but you're removing them completely instead of updating their registration to the new address using information they've already provided to the National Change of Address service. These are real people and they told us where they live. You have the data and we ask that you share it with us in the name of transparency.

Request for public records

As we approach the November 7th election and enter a busy presidential election year soon after, it is imperative that you clear up these mistakes and misinformation immediately. Your office desperately needs an improvement plan. I am still waiting for information from your office and request the following additional items.

Regarding the most recent purge:

1. The NCOA file from 2019 that contains the new residence address and county for the voters who you just purged.
2. The purged voter list with additional data including date of birth, the field that contains a unique database identifier, the last election the voter participated in, and the voter's new address according to the NCOA list.

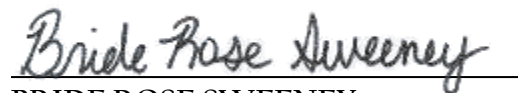
Regarding the next purge:

1. The NCOA file for 2020 showing which voters were targeted then for purging next year in 2024. This spreadsheet should show the voter's basic info including birth date, current registration address, and any new address that the voter moved to according to the NCOA list.
2. Documentation of your plans to execute any purges in 2024 including timing and any tests you will do on the list to ensure no eligible voters who still reside in Ohio are removed.

Every eligible voter who is removed from the rolls in error is a travesty—but it's fixable. Please reinstate these voters to the rolls and perform the necessary due diligence and quality testing on the purge list. Anything worth doing is worth doing right, especially when it comes to our right to vote.

I look forward to your timely response to this urgent matter.

Respectfully,



BRIDE ROSE SWEENEY

State Representative, 16th District
135th Ohio General Assembly