OHIO
CHAMBER *of*
COMMERCE | **PAC**
Political Action Committee

2020 Primary Election Report – Part 2

- Click Here for Updated 2020 Candidates List -

No Surprises After Additional Votes Counted

As the more than 200,000 outstanding absentee and provisional ballots cast for the Ohio 2020 primary election were tallied and certified (or disqualified) by yesterday's deadline, no outcomes from the April 28 unofficial results were changed in state office races. But there are a few interesting stories about this whole primary election season that may be important for us to be aware of, especially as consideration is given to how we may proceed differently for November's general election.

In Butler County, the Board of Elections received 317 mail-in ballots postmarked correctly by April 27 after the May 8 receipt deadline, rendering all of those votes automatically disqualified. In many counties, more than half of the onsite drive-through provisional ballots cast on April 28 were deemed ineligible since those voters had not submitted a request for a mail-in ballot as a prerequisite. This poses a few challenges if Ohio decides to follow the trend of states adjusting their process for the general election. For example, Michigan just announced they will be automatically sending the applications for an absentee ballot to every registered voter for the general election. Previously, voters had to request the application themselves like we have in Ohio. But as we saw with this primary election, the additional step to acquire an absentee ballot severely hurts voter turnout if in-person voting is not accessible or available.

With just over five months to go until the general election, we may not have to worry too much about Ohio making substantial changes to our voting process by the time it rolls around. Thankfully, Ohio already has one of the more extensive absentee voting systems. The Secretary of State's office may take additional steps to promote absentee voting for those who may need it going into November in lieu of any substantial changes such as mailing ballot applications to every registered voter. Then again, a lot can happen in an election year, not to mention we're still in the middle of this COVID-19 pandemic, so we'll hear about Ohio's general election plan in the next few long months.

Federal Judge Orders Electronic Ballot Issue Signatures Now Eligible

U.S. District Judge Edmund Sargus from Cincinnati has handed down a controversial order allowing several ballot issue campaigns to gain signatures digitally, while also expanding the signature-gathering window until July 31. This order came in response to complaints brought forward by Ohioans for Raising the Wage and Ohioans for Secure and Fair Elections. However, this order may apply to all pending ballot issue campaigns gathering signatures, but clarification is needed.

One of the challenges we face with ballot issues in Ohio, at least in the context of our business community, is that we can see a lot of "out-of-state" money thrown behind our opposition's side of an issue leaving our in-state stakeholders to pick up the vast majority of the tab in fighting it. This order sets a precedent to make ballot issue changes to our state constitution easier to facilitate, which both in the short and long term can be detrimental to Ohio businesses.

So, what's next? Well, Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose immediately spoke out against the order. And the next step is for an appeal to this order to be brought forward in the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals. The timeline is unclear, but we'll likely hear about an appeal in the near future.