



Via Electronic Mail

August 25, 2020

Lisa Schwartz, Director
Georgia Ricketts-Smith, Deputy Director
93 W. Hunter Street
Logan, Ohio 43138

Re: Tie Vote Regarding Polling Place Reductions

Dear Director Schwartz and Deputy Director Ricketts-Smith:

On July 20, 2020, the Hocking County Board of Elections held a regular meeting and tied on two motions to reduce the number of polling locations for the November 3, 2020 General Election. The first motion was to reduce the number of polling locations from 10 to 4. The second motion was to reduce the number of polling locations from 10 to 7. On August 10, 2020, the Board submitted the two tie votes for resolution pursuant to Ohio Revised Code 3501.11(X).

A board of elections may relocate a polling location when necessary to provide adequate facilities for conducting elections.¹ At least three board members must vote to have a single voting location serve more than one precinct.² Boards of elections must consider a variety of factors before reducing polling locations, including accessibility to voters; compliance with the Americans with Disability Act (“ADA”); convenience of the polling location to the voters; timing of the change; notice to voters; expectation of voter turnout; distance between old and new locations; and length and mode of travel for the voter to arrive at the polling location.³ In addition, for the November 3, 2020 General Election, boards must configure polling locations to adhere to the COVID-19 health recommendations and mandates.⁴

The record before me indicates that board members considered many of these factors. During the discussion leading up to the two votes, Director Schwartz and the board members considered the COVID-19 health precautions, the average age of poll workers, accessibility of polling locations, and voter turnout for the years 2012 and 2016 in the general elections. However, the number of poll workers was highlighted as a primary reason to reduce the number of polling locations.

¹ [R.C. 3501.29](#).

² [R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(2\)](#).

³ [R.C. 3501.29](#).

⁴ [Ohio Secretary of State Health Guidance for Boards of Elections](#) (published August 12, 2020).

There is still ample time to actively recruit the number of poll workers needed for the existing locations, especially when utilizing the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (“CARES”) Act Funds,⁵ and the \$1,000,000 I sought and received approval from the Ohio Controlling Board for funding to counties for precinct election official recruitment and training. I am partnering with you to recruit a new generation of poll workers through programs like Day for Democracy, Youth at the Booth, and Heroes in Democracy, and to recruit attorneys, certified public accountants, and others who wish to serve on Election Day and receive continuing education credit.⁶

Therefore, based upon the facts presented, I do not see a sufficient reason to support either proposal to reduce the number of polling locations. Accordingly, I break the first tie against the motion to reduce the polling locations from 10 to 4. Additionally, I break the second tie against the motion to reduce the polling locations from 10 to 7.

In conclusion, the number of polling locations in Hocking County shall remain at 10, absent an emergency or an agreement of at least three members.

Yours in service,



Frank LaRose
Ohio Secretary of State

cc: Jo Ann Murtha, Chairman of Hocking County Board of Elections
Ed Zell, Member of Hocking County Board of Elections
Rodney Hedges, Member of Hocking County Board of Elections
William Henderson, Member of Hocking County Board of Elections

⁵ [Directive 2020-11](#).

⁶ See additional resources at <https://www.ohiosos.gov/elections/poll-workers/>.