Ironically, according to Alicia Reece, Ohio House Representative, there was only one incident of voter fraud officially reported in recent Ohio elections. Additionally, there have been numerous allegations of election fraud through the use of private proprietary election hardware and software.

By JAMES W. WADE III

Staff reporter

A coalition has formed to repeal HB 194. The repeal coalition, referred to as “Fair Election Ohio,” submitted the required 1000 signatures necessary to start the repeal process on July 18 and have started collecting the signatures necessary overturn the bill.

This bill is part of a wave of voter suppression laws across the country passed this year by newly elected Republican governors and legislatures. It is a difficult bill to describe because of the sheer quantity of voting restrictions included (the bill is more than 250 pages long and affects over 100 existing Ohio laws).

In short, HB 194 means that “the short lines and uncomplicated voting process during 2008’s record voting turnout will be replaced by long waits, confused voters, and a glut of provisional ballots.”

Or, as Congresswoman Marcia Fudge put it, HB 194 has provisions that “seem to have no other purpose than to directly disenfranchise eligible voters.”

HB 194 can be repealed by a vote of the people if 231,000 valid voter signatures are submitted on petitions and filed by September 29, 2011.

This blatant voter suppression bill includes such gems as not allowing early voting on Sundays, probably because Black churches encourage their members to go down to the Board of Elections after Sunday services. It shortens the period for early voting and for absentee voting, making it harder to vote for the average Ohioan.

Former Ohio Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner is spearheading the drive. She argues that HB 194 “makes it harder to vote” and, even when you vote, she insists it makes it “harder to have your vote counted.”

Unions are asking other civic organizations to join the campaign to advocates for voting rights

by collecting signatures to repeal Ohio House Bill 194, which was signed into law on July 5th, 2011.

In September 2011, the ACLU of Ohio joined voting rights advocates, state legislators, and labor unions to support a referendum on Ohio House Bill 194, which would severely limit early voting, prohibit poll workers from assisting voters completing forms, and make it more difficult for local boards of elections to promote early voting to all registered voters.

“Rather than protecting right to vote,” said Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown, a witness at the hearing, “we’re seeing a brazen attempt around the country to undermine it.”

He pointed to legislation that would make it more difficult for citizens to register to vote or for groups like the League of Women Voters to register new voters, cut back on early voting, require government-issued IDs that specifically target young and minority voters, as well as disenfranchise ex-felons.

The petition targets the most egregious provisions of the law, among them:

• A provision of the bill requires that cities must have precincts with a minimum of 500 registered voters. This provision does not apply to rural areas.

• Pollworkers are prohibited from telling voters if they are in the wrong precinct.

• The bill includes a new definition of the term “corporations” in regards to political contributions. Brunner argues that the bill will weaken regulations requiring corporations to report donations in Ohio.

• The bill has several “gotcha” provisions that will allow Republicans to toss out provisional ballots that have minor problems. Provisional ballots are overwhelmingly cast in Ohio’s urban centers by poor and minority voters.

• The bill also contains measures aimed at eliminating Ohio's minor parties.

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According to Brunner, the new law will allow election officials to use voters' Social Security number to purge voters from the voting rolls.