Fudge also noted that Husted failed to give Cuyahoga County Election Board members an opportunity to brief their respective positions before making his decision. “Directives such as this continue to erode the confidence of the people in their elected officials at the county, state and national level. Shame on you, John Husted.”

By JAMES W. WADE III
Staff Reporter

Congresswoman Marcia Fudge (D-OH 11th District) stood on the steps of the Board of Elections calling for the right to restore all early voting. Fudge, with various elected officials and ministe urged Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted to change his decision for the early voting restrictions.

Husted became the deciding factor when the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections Board became deadlocked on whether they should open board offices on the last two Saturdays and Sundays in October for voting.

It was clear that the two Democrats Inajo Chappell and Sandy McNair were sall for this past practice, but Republicans Jeff Hastings and Deborah Sutherland did not feel the extended hours were necessary.

In a letter to the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections Director Jane Platten dated July 13, 2012, Husted indicated thatCuyahogaCountyvoters are not entitled to extended hours for in-person voting. He stated that, because Board of Elections in other counties are operating under budget constraints, voters in Cuyahoga County may not vote on weekends or in any time period beyond the Board's normal business hours prior to the November 6th General Election.

"I would like to remind Secretary Husted thatCuyahogaCountyhas demonstrated efficient use of its resources during the 2008 and 2010 election cycles without a need to reduce extended in-person early voting in the past," said Fudge.

"More importantly, voting is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. It's about the most basic right of every American, the right to vote. I'm left to wonder what Ohio's Secretary of State is afraid of… the elderly, minorities, students, and the poor might actually take advantage of voting during extended hours? This decision is an attack on voting rights."

A study by Norman Robbins, of Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates, estimates that at least 65 percent of early voters in the county come from predominantly Black neighborhoods. (He matched voter records and zip codes).

Many Democrats feel not extending the hours is just another way to stop a lot of the large Black Democratic county from voting for President Barack Obama in November in hopes to help Republican Mitt Romney.

"In sports, an effort to rig the outcome of a contest is called point-shaving. By decrees and laws that deliberately discourage certain blocks of voters from exercising their right to vote, draw your own conclusions about their intent," said Fudge.

Various preachers spoke out against Husted's decision to do away with early voting. "Early

in-person voting restrictions break the spirit if not the letter of the law. We are fighting anew to restore what Congress intended in the Voting Rights Act of 1965, to outlaw once and for all procedures, practices and voting qualifications that deny or abridge the right of any citizen of theUnited Statesto vote on account of race or color. By denying weekend and extended hour voting,Ohio's Secretary of State is targeting a voting option that disproportionately affects African American voters," said Rev. Rodney Thomas.

"Those buses will continue to roll, said Rev. Tony Minor, director of advocacy at Lutheran Metropolitan Ministries. "For months, the clergy had been planning a non-partisan effort to use those evenings and weekends leading up the election to get voters to the polls," he added.

"We have seen this movie before. This is not politics. This is politricks," said Khalid Samad, activist and founder of Peace in the Hood.

"History is repeating itself in a very ugly way," State Sen. Nina Turner said. "Jim Crow has been resurrected. He is making repeat performances in portions of the South and he has packed his bags and is headed north."

Fudge also noted that Husted failed to give Cuyahoga County Election Board members an opportunity to brief their respective positions before making his decision. "Directives such as this continue to erode the confidence of the people in their elected officials at the county, state and national level. Shame on you, John Husted."

Other state elected officials who spoke included, State Rep. Sandra Williams, State Rep. Bill Patmon, and State Rep. John Barnes Jr. as well as Cleveland City Council Members Zack Reed, Kevin Conwell and Mamie Mitchell.

The other ministers were Rev. Timothy Eppinger of God's Tabernacle of Faith Church and Rev. Larry Harris Sr. ofMountOliveMissionaryBaptistChurch.