And in Florida, a federal judge stated he would permanently remove restrictions that severely hampered nonpartisan groups such as the League of Women Voters from conducting voter registration drives.

I applaud the federal court decision announced last week to restore voting rights to the people ofOhio. Judge Peter C. Economus of the U.S. District Court of Southern Ohio reinforced a cherished principle of our nation; equal treatment under the law. He rightly found the state law allowing only military voters to cast ballots in the final three days prior to Election Day unconstitutional.

This was never about denying access to the polls for the men and women who serve in our military. It was about affording the same right to working citizens and all who choose to vote during that time period. In 2008, ninety-eight thousand voters used the opportunity to vote in the final weekend before the Presidential Election. InCuyahogaCounty, more than 56 percent of those voters were African American.

Clearly, this is a victory for fairness and protecting the fundamental voting rights of Americans.

It's unfortunate that Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine has already signaled his intent to appeal. I hope citizens will join me in reminding the Attorney General that erecting barriers to voting serves no just cause. I urge Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted to implement the new hours and deadlines without further delay.

The victory for voting rights in Ohio follows two other positive developments around the nation last week. A federal court struck down the photo ID voting law inTexas. In issuing their ruling, the judges found that the Texas law likely would have a "retrogressive effect" on the ability of minority voters to cast ballots and said that while the required ID itself was free, the "implicit costs" of obtaining the necessary ID "will fall most heavily on the poor."

And in Florida, a federal judge stated he would permanently remove restrictions that severely hampered nonpartisan groups such as the League of Women Voters from conducting voter registration drives.

We must remain vigilant. The forces that seek to suppress the vote keep trying. But it's fair to say that yes, it was a good week.

Voting Update:

Voters in the State of Ohio will begin receiving Vote by Mail ballot applications in their mailboxes as early as Tuesday, September 4th. Vote by Mail ballot applications for voters in the 11th Congressional District are available on the Board of Elections website: www.boe.cuyahogacounty, by calling (216) 443-3298, and at public libraries.

All hand delivered ballot applications must be returned by 6 p.m. on November 2nd. Ballot applications that are returned by mail must be received by the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections on, or before noon on November 3rd.

Voters may call (216) 443-3298 with Vote by Mail and registration questions. For additional information concerning the November 6th Presidential General Election, visit the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections website: www.boe.cuyahogacounty.us.