Ohio has early voting beginning 35 days before an election and ending on the day before Election Day.

Voting, the most sacred right in our democracy is now being threatened thanks to partisan politics. Recently here in Ohio, Secretary of State John Husted suspended two Democratic Board of Elections members Tom Ritchie Sr. and Dennis Lieberman, after they refused to rescind their votes in favor of weekend early voting.

Husted's directive removed weekend early voting privileges for an estimated 93,000 people, according to the Cincinnati Enquirer's count of votes cast in the final days of the 2008 election.

Though Husted has now lifted the suspension of the board members, this is yet another leg of a sophisticated attempt in our state to disenfranchise voters in the state of Ohio.

Secretary Husted's job is to protect voters within the state, not inconvenience and suppress their opportunity to vote. His recent directive sets uniform voting hours across the state but uniformity does not equal justice.

In a separate action, the Ohio Legislature banned voting in the final 72 hours prior to an election except for active duty military personnel. Instead of easing congestion at the polls, these new laws and directives turn back the clock and return us to the prospect of long lines at the polls such as those experienced in 2004.

Even in 2008, when all options were available, African Americans still chose to vote in large numbers in the three days before Election Day and during extended hours and weekends. Nearly half of their in-person early votes were cast during these hours. This is not an across-the-board ban that affects all voters equally, contrary to Husted's claim.

This is clearly a deliberate attack on the right to vote. Ohio can be a model of justice or end up on the wrong side of history, And when "winning at all costs" becomes the objective, whose rights will be the next to fall?

What you need to know: Identification, Absentee and Early Voting in Ohio

Identification

Ohio has an ID requirement for all voters but it does have to be "photo ID." Forms of acceptable identification at the polls include: current and valid photo ID which must show your address (but if you show an Ohio driver's license, your address does not need to be current); a military ID with your name and address; a copy of a current utility bill (including cell phone bills, student housing bills, and printouts of downloaded utility bills); a paycheck; a bank statement; or a government document that shows your name and voting address. The Secretary of State has said that a document from a public college or university with your name and address on it counts as a form of identification, as does a housing bill from any college or university. If you cannot show ID, you can vote by provisional ballot. If you can provide the last four digits of your Social Security number when you vote or if you do not have a Social Security number and you swear to that fact, your ballot will be counted.

Voting by Mail

Ohio is a no-fault absentee state – you do not need to give a reason for voting absentee. Your application to get an absentee ballot must include either your Ohio driver's license number, the last four digits of your Social Security number, or a copy of a form of identification that would be accepted at the polls on Election Day.

Blank applications are available on the web site of the Secretary of State, or at any public library. If you mail it in, your application must be received by the county director of elections by noon on the third day before the election. If you deliver your application in person, you must do so prior to the close of business the day before the election.

Your ballot must be delivered to the director of elections by the close of the polls on Election Day. If you return your ballot by mail, it will be accepted up to ten days after the election, as long as it is signed or postmarked before Election Day. Neither your application nor your ballot needs to be witnessed. *As it currently stands, voters are responsible for paying postage for returning the application and a completed ballot.*

Early Voting

Ohio has early voting beginning 35 days before an election and ending on the day before Election Day. At early voting sites, you can vote any precinct's ballot for that county. If you do not consider your school address to be your permanent address, or if you have not changed your residence yet, then early voting provides an opportunity to vote a ballot at the residence from which you are absent.

Please be sure you are registered to vote. If you have not voted in the last two federal election cycles; if you moved or legally changed your name since you last voted, you will need to re-register.
Details on how to register are available on my website, www.fudge.house.gov.