The court has decided that Ohio must sew up the gaping hole in our voting safety net.

CLEVELAND—State Senator Nina Turner (D-Cleveland) has introduced legislation in the Ohio Senate to restore weekend early voting in Ohio for the 2012 general election. Senate Bill 366 would reverse a directive by Secretary of State Jon Husted that eliminated weekend voting in all 88 counties.

“Public officials at all levels have a moral obligation to make it easier to vote, but some of Ohio’s leaders have ignored this responsibility,” said Senator Turner. “This legislation will reverse the disturbing trend of voter suppression in our state and make it easier for all Ohioans to cast their ballot this fall.”

The legislation would establish weekday and weekend voting hours and require a minimum number of early voting hours for each county. SB 366 includes the following provisions:

- Weekday hours (for the entire early voting period): 8am-7pm

- Saturday hours: 8am-5pm

- Sunday hours: 1pm-5pm

- Restore extended hours for the last three days before the election

SB 366 would also explicitly state that these are minimum hours for early voting and can be expanded by a vote of the local board of elections.

"Uniformity may seem fair on paper, but ignoring the disparate effect caused by these one-size-fits-all solutions is dangerous," noted Turner. "Ohio voters deserve a basic level of access to early voting, but if local boards of elections need to expand upon them to accommodate the needs of their voters, the state should not stand in their way."

Rep. Boyd disappointed

in continuing efforts

to suppress voters
Encourages all to be aware of changes and ensure their voice is heard

COLUMBUS -- State Rep. Barbara Boyd (D-Cleveland) urged citizens to be aware of upcoming elections changes so they may ensure their voices are heard in this crucial election year. Since 2008, Republican legislators and Secretary of State Jon Husted have led ongoing efforts to limit and restrict voting opportunities across Ohio.

Most recently, Ohio's chief elections officer Secretary Husted announced that he is canceling all weekend early voting. At least 21 counties had agreed to hold early voting hours on weekends, and several large counties had been denied extended evening and weekend early voting hours by Secretary Husted's tie breaking decisions, including in Cuyahoga County.

"Since the 2008 presidential election, when record numbers of minorities, young people and lower income voters turned out thanks to evening and weekend early voting hours, Republicans have been attempting to once again make it more difficult for voters to have their voices heard," said Rep. Boyd.

The African American community made up the largest percentage of voters participating in early in person voting in 2008, and now in this upcoming election the opportunity for all citizens to take part in our electoral process will be greatly limited.

"African Americans, women and other minority groups have fought and even died for the sacred right to have their voice heard and participate in our democracy, and now that right is being threatened. It is critical that we all do whatever it takes to ensure our voices are heard and votes are counted. If you cannot make it to the polls on Election Day or during the limited evening hours in the final two weeks before the election I urge you to vote absentee," said Rep. Boyd. Secretary Husted's directive would keep boards of elections open till 7pm Monday through Friday in the final two weeks before the election, but there will be no weekend hours currently.

Studies have shown that eliminating early in person voting disproportionately effects African Americans who according to a recent Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates report made up over 56 percent of all early in person voters in the last general election. It should also be noted that extended voting hours have been permitted in Republican leaning counties such as Warren and Butler which has substantially smaller minority voting populations in comparison with counties such as Cuyahoga and Franklin where voting hours will be more limited as a result of Secretary Husted's directive.

"I lived through voter suppression, I lived through civil rights, I saw it growing up in the south. I lived through the segregated fountains and bathrooms, and I remember when my parents couldn't vote. We were second class citizens, we were colored," Rep. Boyd said. "Now they are

trying to make me feel colored again."

Budish statement

on recommendation

to fire BOE members

Ohio House Democratic Leader Armond Budish (D-Beachwood) released the following statement upon the recommendation by a hearing examiner for Secretary of State Jon Husted that Montgomery County Elections Board members Dennis Lieberman and Tom Ritchie Sr. be fired for supporting expanded weekend early voting hours. The two board members came under fire when they refused to support limiting the previously agreed to early voting hours for Montgomery County following a statewide directive by Secretary Husted.

"I urge Secretary Husted to do the right thing and allow these men to continue to serve on the board of elections. Voting is our most fundamental right and Dennis Lieberman and Tom Ritchie are standing up and fighting to protect that right. It is time for Secretary Husted to put partisan politics aside, protect the voting rights of Ohioans, and do what is best for the voters of Montgomery County and the state, and that is to expand early in-person voting hours to weekends."

Reps. Clyde and Reece

urge Sec. Husted not

to appeal court order

State Rep. Kathleen Clyde (D-Kent) and State Rep. Alicia Reece (D-Cincinnati) are calling on Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted to accept a federal court order to stop needlessly throwing out provisional ballots and disenfranchising voters.

“This court order is a simple solution to a shameful problem. If followed, thousands of Ohioans will have their vote counted this fall instead of having it thrown out, tossed on a heap of rejected provisional ballots,” Rep. Clyde said.

Reece and Clyde sent a letter to Husted explaining that Ohio is among the leading states for disenfranchising voters with provisional ballots and that there is a huge disparity in counting votes from county to county. Voters in larger counties with higher percentages of African-American voters saw higher rates of ballot rejection in 2008.

“Often the problem is the poll worker has made an error, or it is as simple as a voter is confused by being in the right polling location, but at the wrong table. These votes were cast provisionally and often went uncounted. Finally, Ohio will start using common sense in counting votes,” Rep. Reece said.

Husted has sued multiple times to stop the courts from ordering that these provisional votes are counted. There is a provisional ballot crisis in Ohio and the federal court has ordered a solution that is easy to implement.

Secretary Husted and Republican lawmakers have for years resisted Democrats’ efforts to fix this problem legislatively. They instead acted to make the problem worse by advocating for and

passing legislation that would have created more reasons to throw out provisional ballots and let poll workers abandon their duty to direct voters to the correct precinct.

See the letter below:

Secretary of State Jon Husted

180 E. Broad Street, 16th floor

Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Secretary Husted,

Yesterday, a federal court judge again ruled that Ohio's provisional ballot counting process is unconstitutional and has ordered you to require Boards of Election not to let poll worker error stand in the way of counting valid votes. We write to ask that you not waste taxpayer dollars appealing this common-sense ruling. This ruling will bring real fairness and uniformity to provisional vote counting.

The federal court is finally addressing a serious problem with Ohio elections. In 2008, Ohio

threw out 39,989 provisional ballots. According to data from your website and the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, Ohio ranked in the top seven states in the country for rejected provisional ballots compared with total ballots cast. In 2008, one in every 145 ballots cast in Ohio was thrown out due to provisional ballot problems. This must end.

Worse, the chance that your ballot is thrown out for a provisional ballot problem is higher in counties with larger African-American populations. The numbers don't lie. In 2008 in Cuyahoga County, 1 of every 91 ballots was thrown out for provisional ballot problems, whereas in Pike County, only 1 in 1,285 was rejected for the same reason. In Franklin County, 1 in 110 ballots were rejected for provisional ballot problems, three times higher than the rate of Delaware County where 1 in 333 ballots were rejected. In Hamilton County, 1 of every 109 ballots were rejected, twice the rate of Warren County where 1 in 209 ballots were rejected for provisional ballot problems. That is not uniform. This ruling will reduce this disparity.

You recently announced that voters can now change their address online by the registration deadline of October 9, 2012. While that is a step in the right direction, voters will still show up on Election Day needing to change their address as Ohio law allows. We will still have tens of thousands of provisional ballots cast as in past elections.

The court has decided that Ohio must sew up the gaping hole in our voting safety net. We urge you to accept the court's decision, not to appeal it, and to start implementing the fair and common-sense solution that will enable all eligible voters to have their voices heard in Ohio's elections. The presidential election is only a few months away, so this is no time for uncertainty. You have the opportunity to preside over the most successful election in recent history if you stop fighting the counting of votes.