National Voter Registration Day in Cuyahoga County

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Tuesday was National Voter Registration Day and Congresswoman, Marcia Fudge (OH-11), spearheaded a voter registration campaign in Cleveland. Eliza Bryant residents joined the Congresswoman. Fudge, along with labor, faith and civic leaders, appeared on the steps of the Board of Elections, located at 2925 Euclid Avenue,to make sure all eligible voters in Cuyahoga County are registered and prepared to vote this fall.

The Cleveland “For the People” Voter-Protection event was one of several held across the country on the same day, at the same time, hosted by members of the Congressional Black Caucus. This national effort was launched as a part of the "For the People" Voter Protection Initiative, H. Res. 542, to bring attention to block the vote efforts (like early voting restrictions and voter ID laws) that may impede as many as 5 million people from registering to vote and/or casting a ballot this November.

At least 34 states have introduced laws that would require voters to show photo identification in order to vote and at least 12 states have introduced laws that would require proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate, to register to vote, or to vote. The states that have already cut back on 2012 voting rights constitute 171 electoral votes – 63 percent of the 270 needed to win the presidency.

This single day of coordinated field, technology and media efforts created pervasive awareness of voter registration opportunities, and reached thousands of unregistered voters to equip our communities with the information to be vote-ready before Election Day.

One resident from Eliza Bryant, Ms. Willie Beard (Ms. B), came to support the effort of Congresswoman Fudge, and participated by registering her new address so she can be an early voter.

On the program was Sen. Nina Turner, Rev. Larry Harris Sr., Rev. Rodney Thomas, Rev. Tim Eppinger andKhalid Samad. Warrensville Heights Councilwoman Ruby Nelson spoke on behalf of seniors and gave a brief history on why it is so important to vote. Erika Forde Anthony raised awareness about convicted felons in Ohio, who have the right to vote.

“In Ohio, an individual with a felony conviction ‘CAN’ vote, post-incarceration. Moreover, if an individual is in jail, on probation, parole or in a halfway house, they CAN also vote,” said Erika. Ohio’s voter registration deadline, being October 9, 2012, brought a sense of urgency to the day’s events.

Other speakers included Warrensville heights Mayor, Brad Sellers, and South Euclid Mayor, Georgine Welo. Music was provided by a group of young men named Y.M.Z., who reminded all of the patriotic duty to vote with a special rendition of “America the Beautiful” by Amonica Davis.

Cuyahoga County Democratic Chairman, Stuart Garson, spoke on behalf of the party and advised everyone to fill out their voting ballot all the way down to the bottom. Each race to be decided in November carries great importance.

“Make sure you vote each election. Remember not caring for the Secretary of State? Look what happen – his job is the deciding factor and it never is in favor of the Democrats,” Garson said.

In Ohio, state-elected officials continue to appeal a federal court ruling that found Ohio's ban on voting during the last three days before an election (except for members of the military and overseas voters) as unconstitutional. This was the voting period of choice for an estimated 93,000 Ohiovoters in the 2008 election.

Congresswoman Fudge and members of the Congressional Black Caucus are committed to ensuring that no eligible voter is turned away from the ballot box during early voting and on Election Day.

National Voter Registration Day is not a real holiday (when people get a day off work, often with pay) or even an officially proclaimed holiday, like Law Day (when politicians get to make pronouncements but people still have to work).

Rep. Fudge played a leading role in this nationwide effort. She sent a letter jointly with Congressional Black Caucus Chairman, John Lewis, asking all CBC members to hold events on Tuesday, which happened to have been National Voter Registration Day.