“Not since the days of Jim Crow have we seen such a blatant and deliberate attack on the right of all Americans to vote. In the name of election reform, new barriers threaten to disenfranchise millions of citizens.

By JAMES W. WADE III

Staff Reporter

Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge (OH-11) will host the Stand Up for Voting Rights press conference on Wednesday, July 13, 2011 with 12 civil rights organizations and numerous members of Congress to draw attention to recent restrictive voting measures that will strip citizens of their constitutional right to vote.

Some of the organizations that will join the Congresswoman will be, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, National Federation of Democratic Women/ Maryland State Chapter, AFL-CIO, American Civil Liberties Union, National Action Network, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, ACLU to name a few.

Legislation passed in Ohio drastically discourages voting, specifically for African Americans, Latinos, seniors, and students, by reducing the time allotted for early voting, eliminating the requirement that poll workers direct voters to correct precincts, and pending strict voter ID provisions. Across the country, state legislatures have enacted, or have pending legislation, echoing similar detrimental voting changes.

Fudge feels that many of these bills have only one true purpose: The disenfranchisement of specific populations of eligible voters. Congresswoman Fudge is preparing a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder urging him to exercise his authority to direct the Department of Justice to investigate whether photo ID laws violate the Voting Rights Act. She and other members, and civil rights leaders, will speak on the effect of these obviously harmful provisions on vulnerable populations and the impact on future elections.

“Not since the days of Jim Crow have we seen such a blatant and deliberate attack on the right of all Americans to vote. In the name of election reform, new barriers threaten to disenfranchise millions of citizens. These measures disproportionately impact the poor, African Americans, Latinos, the elderly, disabled and students,” said Congresswoman Fudge.

“The essence of our democracy is ‘one person, one vote,’ but instead of all members of the electorate deciding who should lead our government, we now have governors and state legislatures shaping who the electorate should be to improve their chances of retaining power. This is an attack on democracy itself,” Fudge added.

Wednesday evening, Congresswoman Fudge will lead what's called a special order hour focusing on restrictive voter reform laws on the floor of Congress. This is not just an issue in Ohio, but a troubling development in states around the country. A special order can be convened by any Member of Congress to discuss any issue.

Congresswoman Fudge is on a mission to bring attention to restrictive voting provisions. Last Saturday she sponsored a meeting to discuss SB 5 and voter suppression at Liberty Hill Baptist Church Performing Arts Center. Local ministers, elected officials and union representatives were invited to participate.

AJ Stokes from We Are Ohio spoke about SB5. We Are Ohio is a citizen-driven, community-based, bipartisan coalition that has come together to repeal SB 5, the unfair attack on employee rights and worker safety.

We Are Ohio includes public and private sector workers and employees, police officers, firefighters, teachers, nurses, pastors, small business owners, Republicans and Democrats, local elected officials and business leaders, students, moms, dads, family members, and your neighbors.

Stokes stressed the danger of SB 5, and informed how it will destroy jobs and harm communities. More than 10,000 volunteers have stepped forward to circulate petitions to get this on the ballot.

Congresswoman Fudge also discussed the importance of House Bill 194. The bill which targets the core of Ohio's Democratic voters is aimed to work against President Obama in the 2012 election. Given the closely divided swing nature of the Ohio electorate, it is likely to disenfranchise more than enough young, elderly, low income, working class and people of color to guarantee a permanent Republican majority in the Buckeye State.

Under the direction of GOP Governor John Kasich himself the beneficiary of a dubious vote count in 2010, the Ohio Republicans are clearly determined to make it as difficult as possible for traditional Democrats to register, vote or get their votes counted in future elections.

Since 2000, the Republicans have eliminated more than a 1.5 million voters from the Buckeye state voter rolls. The purges have been centered on urban voters. Moreover, in 2004 hundreds of thousands of additional Ohio voters were disenfranchised by orchestrated bottlenecks at polling places that forced people to wait seven hours and more in line. The lines were most evident in the heavily Democratic urban areas of Cincinnati, Columbus and Cleveland.

The Call & Post obtained a draft copy of the letter to the U. S. Attorney General. Congresswoman Fudge addressed in the letter to the U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder some of the problems it will cause.

This is one of the problems she addressed; “Restrictive voter photo identification legislation has the potential to block millions of eligible American voters, and thus suppress the right to vote. We urge you to exercise your authority to examine these laws so that voting rights are not jeopardized. We also request that you brief us on the efforts the Department is undertaking to ensure these new laws are implemented in accordance with the Voting Rights Act,” Congresswoman Fudge said in the letter.

We Are Ohio had to collect 231,149 valid signatures from registered voters in a minimum of 44 counties by June 30 to place a citizen's veto on the ballot. As of press time the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections (BOE) is still verifying signatures.