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By JAMES W. WADE III

Staff Reporter

Pastors, civic leaders and Mayor Frank G. Jackson all united to show support in defeating HB 194.

Reverend E.T. Caviness and Bishop F.E. Perry spoke of bringing everyone together in unity to support not only HB 194 but President Barack Obama.

The bill burdens the working poor, elderly, minority, student and homeless populations. Statistics have shown that the voting options eliminated in this bill, especially early voting, are those that were disproportionately used by African-American voters in 2008.

“I could not afford to sit idly by and do nothing against this dire, devastating and deliberate attempt to suppress voters and disenfranchise families in our churches and communities. It’s our responsibility as leaders to stand in the gap for the least, the lost and the left out which are the core values of our leader and great founder the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.” Caviness said.

Political Strategist Arnold Pinkney spoke about the affect this bill will have in the Black community.

“Imagine the factory workers in northern Ohio who can't take time off work to visit the polls on Election Day. In 2008, they could take a free hour on the preceding Saturday to visit the polls. Now, they cannot. Imagine voters in inner city Columbus showing up to vote in the wrong precinct,” said Pinkney.

In 2008, poll workers were required to point them in the right direction to ensure each vote counted. Now, poll workers are not. Imagine those registered voters without direct access to the Internet or even television. In 2008, counties reminded them of the election by mailing them absentee ballot applications. Now, counties are forbidden from doing so. Many Kenyon College students, who voted in 2008, voted early to save the hassle of planning their vote around classes, meetings, and sporting events. Now, they cannot.

Election experts have estimated that if this bill were in place in 2008, forty percent of 2008 voters in Ohio would have to find a different way to vote.

That year, nearly 1.7 million people voted early.

Over 300,000 signatures have been turn in and now it’s a matter of waiting for them to be counted to make sure the required 230,000 signatures are valid.