

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 22, 2020

Dear Ohio College and University Presidents,

As our State continues to grapple with the challenges presented by COVID-19, our nation is relying on Ohio's colleges and universities to take a leadership role in ensuring access to the ballot box. This duty is particularly important as we commemorate national voter registration day on September 22, 2020.¹ Your institutions play a key role in ensuring that students understand how to access and exercise their constitutionally enshrined right to vote. Under normal circumstances, students face barriers to voting, and in these difficult times, those barriers have multiplied. We ask that each of you to take steps to ensure your institution commits to easing barriers for your faculty, students and staff to vote.

As we know, the 1965 Higher Education Act (HEA) helped increase access to higher education for low-income and first-generation college students. In 1998, recognizing the importance of involving younger generations in the democratic process, Congress expanded the scope of the act to include provisions on student voting. Section 487(a)(23) of the HEA as reauthorized in 1998 specified that institutions must make a good faith effort to facilitate student voter registration. This reinforced vital role institutions of higher education play in educating and encouraging students to vote.

Your institutions have the opportunity to play an essential role in ensuring that young Americans participate in our democracy by taking simple steps such as designating places where students can complete voter registration forms or absentee ballot requests. Colleges can text students where these one-stop election stations are located and can e-mail students a voter registration link.

Institutions should share broad voter education information about how to vote, including the following:

- Communicate to your students to ensure they are registered to vote and that their registration information is up to date.
- Explain Ohio's voter ID requirements directly to students and staff with emails, posters or mailers. Students driver's license may be expired this year, but the Ohio legislature authorized individuals to vote with an expired license, which students, faculty and staff may not know.²
- Clarify that if a student's current address varies from where they registered when they go to vote, they can vote absentee, with the mailer sent to another address, or they can vote provisionally if they can prove their address.³

¹ <https://nationalvoterregistrationday.org/>

² Since the State of Ohio is in a state of emergency and the Bureau of Motor Vehicles have been difficult for Ohioans to access since the pandemic began, voters may use expired state IDs or driver's licenses *so long as* they expired on or after March 9, 2020. <https://www.ohiosos.gov/elections/voters/id-requirements/>

³ A current and valid photo identification, a military identification, or a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document, other than a notice of voter registration mailed by a

- Be prepared to educate students on how to vote by mail or vote provisionally in the event that campuses close due to the pandemic.
- Make clear to students that where you register to vote will not affect federal financial aid such as Pell Grants, Perkins or Stafford loans, or your dependency status for FAFSA; being registered to vote at a different address from your parents does not prevent them from claiming you as a dependent on their taxes; and being deemed out-of-state for tuition purposes does not prevent you from choosing to register to vote in your campus community.
- Provide faculty, staff, and students with information about how to volunteer as poll workers.

Students, faculty and staff at your institutions need the type of nonpartisan voter information described in this letter. In a time where voter disinformation is rampant, your colleges and universities have not only a legal obligation, but also a moral obligation to make your campuses an example of democratic participation. Thank you for your leadership and for taking every step possible to ease the barriers of voting for eligible voters on your campuses.

Sincerely,



Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress



Tim Ryan
Member of Congress



Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

board of elections under section [3503.19](#) of the Revised Code, that shows the individual's name and current address, or provides the individual's driver's license or state identification card number or the last four digits of the individual's social security number Ohio Revised Code 3505.181(B)6