

August 22, 2011

**Public Comment before the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections
concerning absentee ballots**

Good morning. I am Carol Gibson, Co-President of the Cuyahoga Area League of Women Voters. I appreciate the opportunity to give public comment this morning on the important subject of absentee ballots.

The League believes it's in the best interest of the voters to send out absentee ballot applications to all registered voters in the county as soon as possible. This action would reduce confusion by retaining the present practice of mailing applications to all voters before it might be forbidden by state law at the end of September.

While registering voters at the Cleveland Heights-University Heights library on Sunday, July 31st, people often told me they didn't need to pick up an absentee application because they would be getting one in the mail. I did not speak to even one person who was aware that this year might be different.

Confusion and uncertainty are two enemies of a robust voter turnout, and even the best information campaign would fall short at this late date.

Can you imagine the reaction of voters who are assuming they will receive absentee applications from the Board of Elections without requesting them, only to discover too late that things have changed?

The worst reaction actually would not be anger, but disaffection. As League members interact with voters, we are aware of people discounting voting—an impatient wave of the hand, or a shrug of the shoulders and shake of the head; we hear comments like, “it doesn't do any good,” or it is a, “waste of time.”

You, the Board of Elections, have the power to guarantee that voters in Cuyahoga County will receive their expected absentee applications this year. Mailing them out while you still are allowed to do so is one small, but meaningful way the board of can keep faith with its voters.

Thank you.