

EXHIBIT 10



**TESTIMONY OF PROJECT VOTE
STATE GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT AND REFORM COMMITTEE
OHIO STATE SENATE
NOVEMBER 19, 2013**

Project Vote submits this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 238 (SB 238) and in support of the right of Ohio citizens to vote in advance of Election Day. Project Vote is a national nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that promotes voting in historically underrepresented communities. Through its research, advocacy, and direct legal services, Project Vote works to ensure that these constituencies are able to participate fully in American civic life by registering and voting.

SB 238 would restrict the right of Ohioans to vote in person before Election Day by shortening Ohio's early voting period. Currently, voters have the right to cast a ballot in person starting 35 days before an election. The first six days of this early voting period coincide with the last six days of the state's voter registration period. This six-day overlap creates a feature of Ohio elections that is immensely popular with voters: "Golden Week," during which people may both register and vote early with one trip to the Board of Elections.

This legislation aims to restrict the voting rights of Ohioans by reducing the number of in-person early voting days from 35 to 29. Not only would this needlessly limit the time during which voters may participate in elections, it would also eviscerate Golden Week; the right Ohioans currently enjoy to register and vote on the same day would be eliminated. Since the convenience offered by early voting and Golden Week are of particular importance to working people and those without easy access to transportation, SB 238 will affect the same constituencies that are already underrepresented in the electorate, low income and minority citizens.

The burden that SB 238 would impose on voters is not a new concept in Ohio. Last year, the Ohio General Assembly passed HB 194 in an attempt shorten the early voting period and abolish Golden Week—and then quickly repealed that law after facing an enormous backlash in which over 300,000 voters signed a referendum petition to overturn the law. SB 238 is nothing more than an attempt to resurrect a legislative attack on voting rights that Ohioans have overwhelmingly rejected.

This distaste among Ohio voters for shortening the early voting period is hardly surprising. Early voting is an attractive option for Americans with busy lives who have limited time to participate in elections. The benefits of early voting are clear, as it shortens the time voters must wait in line to vote, lessens the burden on poll workers, and provides underrepresented constituencies greater opportunities to participate. Voters clearly are aware of these benefits, and the use of early voting continues to increase nationwide.

In contrast, the benefits of reducing early voting are completely unclear. Little money would be saved given that election offices must be open and well staffed in the weeks leading up the election anyway, and administrative difficulties would only increase as election officials must deal with more voters in the crush of Election Day. But SB 238 is being quickly and quietly pushed, an example of an unfortunate national trend toward voter suppression that we have seen over the past five years. The Senate should stand firm against this anti-democratic tide and reject SB 238. Ohio legislators should instead support bills to expand voting rights and voting opportunities for the citizens of Ohio.