

MEDIA ADVISORY

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Ohio's 'Use It or Lose It' Rule Raises Concerns in McLean County

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – The Supreme Court defended Ohio's voter purge policy called 'Use It or Lose It' in a 5-4 decision. The lead plaintiff, Larry Harmon, is a Navy Veteran who was purged from the voter rolls because he did not vote in two consecutive elections. The Democratic nominee for McLean County Clerk, Nikita Richards says this ruling erodes the democratic process across the country and highlights the discretion local election authorities have over the voter rolls.

"This ruling is extremely disappointing and insensitive to military personnel. A restriction of voting rights, especially when paired with inactivity or change of address, could negatively impact the ability of military family members and service members to vote. I support the stance of my fellow Navy Veteran Harmon, veteran John Helles and all military personnel maintaining their right to vote when they choose."

Veteran and mayor of Oak Harbor, Ohio John Helles was a victim of voter cancellation while on active duty. He challenged Ohio's secretary of state about his removal from the rolls and called the policy "unfair" and "terrible." (NPR, January 10, 2018)

"Purging people based on failure to return a card, while not pursuing more effective and thorough voter address verification methods and assuming that these persons receive and can return said card while on active duty is unreasonable," says Richards.

The ruling makes it legal to remove voters from the voter registration roll who have not been active in six years. Six other states: Georgia, Montana, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia have similar laws. One-third of the voting-age population did not vote in 2016, and nearly two-thirds did not vote in 2014.

"Right now, county clerks have discretion to pursue voter roll maintenance through whatever means they deem appropriate. There is a lack of collaboration between Clerks, the DMV and other government offices for this purpose. With collaboration and process improvement, we can make our state and local governments more efficient and effective."

As County Clerk, Richards pledges to implement a transparent process of voter roll management, work with the state legislature, and utilize federal and state resources to ensure that all have access to the polls.

"Regardless of whether you are a Democrat or Republican, military personnel or civilian, wealthy or are just making ends meet, my responsibility and pledge as your future Clerk is to be a fierce protector and defender of everyone's right to cast their ballot. The Clerk's office should be the last line of defense to ensure that right."

More information about Nikita Richards and her campaign for McLean County Clerk can be found at richardsmcclerk.com, facebook.com/richardsmcclerk, and twitter.com/richardsmcclerk. Richards' background as a Navy Veteran is not an endorsement of her candidacy or her positions by the United States Navy or the Department of Defense.

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