Husted: Military Voters Can Vote By Mail Soon, 266,000 Others Requested Ballots

Secretary of State Jon Husted announced Tuesday that absentee voting for military voters will begin this weekend for the Nov. 4 General Election.

County boards of elections will begin mailing absentee ballots to registered military and overseas voters who have requested a ballot on Saturday, which is 45 days ahead of the election, according to the secretary of state's office.

Meanwhile, boards will mail out absentee ballots to all other voters at the start of the early voting period - a date that is currently a subject of litigation pending before the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals.

A federal court recently ruled legislation (SB 238-a) that shortened the early voting period from the previous 35 days to the day after voter registration begins - about four weeks - violates the equal protection clause and the federal Voting Rights Act. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, September 4, 2014)

Secretary Husted has appealed NAACP v. Husted, arguing that U.S. District Judge Peter Economus's decision conflicts with his previous Obama for America v. Husted ruling that hinged on equal treatment for military and non-military voters' access to early in-person voting the final three days before Election Day.

In his appeal, Mr. Husted, represented by Attorney General Mike DeWine, argues that the law and the secretary's directives setting a statewide early in-person voting schedule with limited weekend and evening hours, treat military and non-military voters equally.

"Ohio has important reasons for settling on its early-voting schedule. Perhaps reasonable people could disagree on whether Ohio should add an extra day here or drop an extra hour there, but it is not the judiciary's job to enter that debate," the brief says.

Sen. Nina Turner (D-Cleveland), who is running against Mr. Husted in the November election, said the appeal disregards the needs of working families.

"The type of statewide uniformity that Jon Husted is pushing creates unequal access for many Ohio voters, and does not take into account the realities faced by individual counties. It's time for Secretary Husted to follow the court order, stop wasting taxpayer money, and let Ohioans cast their ballots," she said in a statement.
Meanwhile, Secretary Husted announced that more than 266,000 Ohio voters have already requested a vote-by-mail ballot for the upcoming election.

The secretary of state's office mailed more than six million absentee ballot applications to registered voters statewide around Labor Day. A second mailing is scheduled for early October to individuals who have registered to vote or updated their voting information since Aug. 1.