

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO
EASTERN DIVISION**

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF OHIO,
OHIO A. PHILIP RANDOLPH INSTITUTE,
LASHUNDA LEE, MUNIA MOSTAFA,
AUDRIANNA VICTORIAN RODRIGUEZ,
and HANNAH TUVELL,
Plaintiffs,**

and

**LIBERTARIAN PARTY OF OHIO,
Proposed Intervenor-Plaintiff,**

v.

Case No. 20-1638

Judge Watson

**FRANK LAROSE, in his official capacity as
Secretary of State of Ohio,
Defendant,**

and

**STATE OF OHIO,
Intervenor-Defendant.**

**MOTION OF PROPOSED INTERVENOR-PLAINTIFF
LIBERTARIAN PARTY OF OHIO TO INTERVENE
UNDER RULE 24**

The Libertarian Party of Ohio respectfully moves to intervene in the above-styled action under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 24. The Libertarian Party of Ohio is one of three recognized political parties in Ohio and was scheduled to elect its congressional and state-office candidates, as well as its controlling committee members, at the March 17, 2020 primary

election. The cancellation of that primary and belated scheduling of the primary for June 2, 2020 caused the Libertarian Party of Ohio irreparable harm.

The General Assembly's newly scheduled election, meanwhile, plainly violates federal law by fixing the voter registration deadline as February 18, 2020 for the newly rescheduled April 28, 2020 primary election. The General Assembly's cancellation of all in person voting, meanwhile, together with its forcing voters to bear most of the cost of procuring and delivering absentee ballots, further causes the Libertarian Party of Ohio, its members, and its candidates irreparable harm.

The Libertarian Party of Ohio has contacted the parties of record to determine whether they object to this motion. Plaintiffs informed the Libertarian Party of Ohio that they do not object. Intervenor-Defendant-State of Ohio informed the Libertarian Party of Ohio that it would decide whether to object once the Motion and accompanying Proposed Complaint was filed. Defendant-LaRose informed the Libertarian Party of Ohio that he needs to take the Motion under consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

/s Mark R. Brown

Mark R. Brown (#81941)
303 East Broad Street
Columbus, OH 43215
Phone: (614) 236-6590
Fax: (614) 236-6956
mbrown@law.capital.edu

*Counsel for Intervenor-Plaintiff
Libertarian Party of Ohio*

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**MEMORANDUM IN SUPPPORT OF MOTION
OF PROPOSED INTERVENOR-PLAINTIFF
LIBERTARIAN PARTY OF OHIO TO INTERVENE
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STATEMENT OF FACTS

According to Ohio's General Assembly, the final day of in-person voting in Ohio's presidential, congressional and state-office primary elections is to “be held on the third Tuesday after the first Monday in March.” *See* R.C. § 3501.01(E). For Ohio’s 2020 congressional, presidential and state-office primary elections, this meant that the election would conclude with

in-person voting at the close of the day on March 17, 2020. As far as Ohioans knew in the early morning hours of March 17, 2020, in-person voting would take place across the State that day as planned, and Ohio would by the end of the day conclude voting in its 2020 primaries.¹

In a press conference on the afternoon of March 16, 2020, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Respondent Secretary reinforced people's understanding that in-person voting would be open as planned. The Governor stated at this press conference that he (the executive branch) lacked the legal authority to change the date of Ohio's 2020 presidential primary election. However, just hours later, on or about 10:11 on that Monday evening, March 16, 2020, Ohio Governor DeWine announced that the Director of the Ohio Department of Health was closing the polling locations in the State of Ohio on Tuesday, March 17, 2020 due to concerns of exposure to COVID-19. Respondent then in the early morning hours of March 17, 2020 issued Directive 2020-16² and ordered local elections officials across Ohio to close their polling places.

Directive 2020-16 not only canceled the March 17, 2020 election, it also directed local elections officials to "remain open on March 17, 2020 to receive any absentee ballots at the boards of elections through 7:30 p.m.," "to process any UOCAVA ballots," "to process any-non UOCAVA absentee ballot post-marked by Monday, March 16, 2020 and received by the boards of elections through March 27, 2020," and prohibited them from "tabulating and reporting any results until the close of polls on [the new election day] Tuesday, June 2, 2020."

Pursuant to Directive 2020-16's new election schedule, local elections officials were ordered to "process absentee ballot applications received at the board of elections postmarked by

¹ The counting of votes, obviously, would have continued after this date. Absentee and Overseas Votes, for example, can still be received and counted under Ohio law after the in-person voting day closes the election.

² <https://www.ohiosos.gov/globalassets/elections/directives/2020/dir2020-06.pdf>.

Tuesday, May 26, 2020," count absentee ballots "postmarked by June 1, 2020 and ... received by the boards of elections no later than Friday, June 12, 2020," and count "UOCAVA absentee ballots ... submitted for mailing not later than 12:01 a.m. at the place where the voter completes the ballot, on Tuesday, June 2, 2020." *Id.* On that Tuesday, June 2, 2020 -- the new election date announced by Respondent -- Directive 2020-16 ordered local elections officials to "conduct in-person voting at ... polls [which] will open at 6:30 a.m. and close at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 2, 2020." *Id.*

In direct violation of federal law and Ohio's then-existing registration requirement, *see, e.g.*, O.R.C. § 3503.19(A) ("Voter registration applications, if otherwise valid, that are returned by mail to the office of the secretary of state or to the office of a board of elections must be postmarked no later than the thirtieth day preceding a primary, special, or general election in order for the person to qualify as an elector eligible to vote at that election."), 52 U.S.C. § 20507(a)(1)(B) (application must be accepted "if the valid voter registration form of the applicant is postmarked not later than the lesser of 30 days, or the period provided by State law, before the date of the election"), Directive 2020-06 also prohibited otherwise eligible voters from continuing to register up until 30 days before the new June 2, 2020 election date: "The boards of elections are prohibited from processing any new voter registrations for the June 2, 2020 presidential primary election. The February 18, 2020 voter registration deadline remains the voter registration deadline." *See* Directive 2020-06, *supra*, note 2.

Prior to Respondent's belated announcement of his Directive, his office either coordinated, or was at least complicit in, the filing of a lawsuit in the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas that sought judicial assistance in canceling the election. *See* Exhibit D attached to Relators' Complaint; Rick Rouan, *Misstatements from LaRose's office sparked elections eve*

chaos in Ohio, COLUMBUS DISPATCH, March 19, 2020.³ Judge Frye in the Common Pleas Court, however, refused the invitation and would not cancel the election. Judge Frye's unexpected assertion of judicial independence reportedly caused "chaos" and "confusion" throughout Ohio's executive branch of Ohio's government, a state of chaos and confusion that the executive branch duly transmitted to local elections officials and eligible voters who had expected to vote.

Even before Judge Frye had announced his decision, Respondent's office had e-mailed local elections officials "to tell them (incorrectly) that Frye had granted the order sought by two elderly voters to stop the election on Tuesday. 'There will be no election tomorrow. We will provide further details regarding the order as soon as humanly possible.'" *Id.* Judge Frye's contrary conclusion reportedly "shocked" Respondent, *id.*, and apparently led him, the Governor, and the Department of Health to pursue an extra-legal path to what they believed was a preordained end.

Respondent's office made this clear when it once again e-mailed local election boards to inform them that "[t]he judge denied the (temporary restraining order)," *id.*, but that "Governor DeWine and Secretary LaRose are working through next steps. We will update you as soon as possible." *Id.* These "next steps" were revealed at approximately 10:30 that evening, when Governor DeWine's Department of Health issued its order closing the polls. *Id.* Respondent quickly followed with Directive 2020-06 and began transmitting it to local elections officials later that night and into the early morning hours. *Id.* When voters awakened on the morning of March 17, 2020, they witnessed conflicting news reports about voting in Ohio, leading to anger and confusion. *See Coronavirus upends primary elections in Florida, Illinois and Arizona; vote postponed in Ohio*, L.A. TIMES, March 17, 2020 ("The election-eve maneuvers left many Ohio

³ <https://www.dispatch.com/news/20200319/misstatements-from-larosersquos-office-sparked-election-eve-chaos-in-ohio>.

voters bewildered or angry after they woke up not knowing whether they should go to polling stations to cast ballots").⁴ Some even attempted to vote. *See* Marty Schladen, *A few Ohio voters still went to closed polls on Tuesday amid coronavirus confusion*, COLUMBUS DISPATCH, March 17, 2020.⁵

On March 17, 2020, the Ohio Democratic Party filed an original action in the Supreme Court of Ohio challenging Defendant-LaRose's action and seeking to have the previously scheduled March 17, 2020 primary concluded by April 28, 2020. Intervener-Plaintiff Libertarian Party of Ohio moved to intervene in that action on March 19, 2020, seeking to have the previously scheduled March 17, 2020 election concluded no later May 12, 2020. Importantly, the Libertarian Party also challenged not only Defendant-LaRose's authority under the federal Constitution to cancel the March 17, 2020 election, but also his authority under the Constitution to substitute his own Directive fixing Ohio's registration deadline as February 18, 2020. Its motion to intervene was granted over the Ohio Democratic Party's and Defendant-LaRose's objections on March 20, 2020.

On March 26, 2020, the Democratic Party moved the Ohio Supreme Court to dismiss it from the case following the General Assembly's having passed 2020 Am.Sub.H.B. No. 197 ("House Bill 197")—an emergency act that voided Directive 2020-06 and established how the primary election would proceed in Ohio. The Ohio Supreme Court granted the Democratic Party's application and dismissed its complaint on March 27. *State ex rel. Ohio Democratic Party v. LaRose*, ___ Ohio St.3d ___, 2020-Ohio1139, ___ N.E.3d ___. On March 31, 2020, it then

⁴ <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2020-03-17/coronavirus-primary-election-confusion-florida-ohio-polling>.

⁵ <https://www.dispatch.com/news/20200317/few-ohio-voters-still-went-to-closed-polls-tuesday-amid-coronavirus-confusion>.

dismissed Intervener-Plaintiff Libertarian Party of Ohio's challenge as moot, stating that should the Libertarian Party wish to press its argument that "House Bill 197 violates federal law (and thus does not render its claim moot)[,] ... that claim is for another day and another case." See *id.*, 2020-1253 at 3.

House Bill 197 was signed into law on or about March 30, 2020. It not only announced an April 28, 2020 election date, it also froze the registration deadline for this federal election on February 18, 2020, some seventy days before the election. Further, it converted Ohio's voting into absentee voting by mail and placed most of the costs of obtaining and voting ballots on the voters. According to Defendant-LaRose, "Voters who want to cast a ballot must [after receiving a post card] then either print out an absentee ballot request form themselves or call their county board and ask for one to be sent to them. Voters must then affix their own postage and send the request to their county board of elections. Boards must then process the request, print the ballot and send it to the voter. Each voter must receive their ballot, cast their vote, and return the ballot in a postage-paid envelope, postmarked by April 27th." *LaRose Issues Statement on Legislation Finalizing Ohio's Primary Election*, March 25, 2020 (emphasis added).⁶

On March 30, 2020, this action was filed. The Ohio Democratic Party moved to intervene as a Defendant on April 1, 2020. Intervener-Plaintiff Libertarian Party of Ohio now moves to intervene as a Plaintiff challenging the legality of the General Assembly's statute. In sum, the Libertarian Party of Ohio agrees with Plaintiffs that House Bill's closing voter registration for the newly scheduled April 28, 2020 federal primary election violates federal law. The Libertarian Party of Ohio also agrees with Plaintiffs that some reasonable accommodation must be made for

⁶ <https://www.ohiosos.gov/media-center/press-releases/2020/2020-03-25/>.

voters to cast ballots in person. Lastly, the Libertarian Party of Ohio agrees with Plaintiffs that Ohio must fully absorb the cost of conducting its massive absentee voting proposal.

Notwithstanding its agreement with Plaintiffs on these many points, the Libertarian Party of Ohio seeks to join this litigation to represent its interests under the First Amendment, *see Democratic Party of the United States v. Wisconsin ex rel. La Follette*, 450 U.S. 107, 124 (1981), and see that Ohio's primary election is concluded by May 12, 2020. The Libertarian Party's National Convention begins on May 21, 2020, and it is important to the Libertarian Party of Ohio to have Ohio's primary election concluded (in a lawful) fashion before this date. Concluding by May 12, 2020 should afford the State sufficient time to count votes and announce results (whether or not fully certified) by May 20, 2020.

ARGUMENT

Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 24 states in relevant part:

(a) INTERVENTION OF RIGHT. On timely motion, the court must permit anyone to intervene who:

(1) is given an unconditional right to intervene by a federal statute; or

(2) claims an interest relating to the property or transaction that is the subject of the action, and is so situated that disposing of the action may as a practical matter impair or impede the movant's ability to protect its interest, unless existing parties adequately represent that interest.

(b) PERMISSIVE INTERVENTION.

(1) *In General*. On timely motion, the court may permit anyone to intervene who:

(A) is given a conditional right to intervene by a federal statute; or

(B) has a claim or defense that shares with the main action a common question of law or fact.

Intervention is freely granted in the federal courts. *See The Wilderness Society v. U.S. Forest Service*, 630 F.3d 1173, 1179 (9th Cir. 2011) (en banc). In order to intervene as of right under Rule 24(a), "(1) the intervenor must file a timely application to intervene; (2) the intervenor must have an interest in the action; (3) the intervenor must show that his interest may be impaired by

the disposition of the action; and (4) the intervenor must show that existing parties do not already adequately represent that interest." S. GENSLER, FEDERAL RULES OF CIVIL PROCEDURE: RULES AND COMMENTARY 514 (2014).

Just as it did in the Ohio Supreme Court under Ohio's version of Rule 24, the Libertarian Party of Ohio has satisfied all four requirements here. This application is timely, having been filed only two days after the initiation of this action and only one day following the Ohio Supreme Court's dismissal of the Libertarian Party of Ohio's challenge to Defendant-LaRose's and the General Assembly's actions. Next, the Libertarian Party of Ohio has an interest that may be impaired by the disposition of this case. The Libertarian Party of Ohio seeks to insure that the primary is concluded before its National Convention, and has an interest in seeing that the primary is conducted lawfully under federal law and the federal Constitution. Last, none of the present parties adequately represent the Libertarian Party's interest in there being a lawful election concluded before the Libertarian National Convention.

Assuming that intervention is not granted as of right, it should alternatively be granted permissively under Rule 24(b). This is left to the discretion of the District Court. *See* GENSLER, *supra*, at 525, There are common questions of law and fact between the Libertarian Party of Ohio's claims and those made by Plaintiffs, and allowing intervention at this early date will not prejudice the parties.

Intervenor-Plaintiff Libertarian Party of Ohio attaches to this Motion a Proposed Complaint in compliance with Rule 24(c) and certifies that both the Motion and the Proposed Complaint will be served upon the parties under Rule 5 through this Court's electronic service system.

CONCLUSION

The Libertarian Party of Ohio respectfully moves that it be allowed to intervene as a Plaintiff in the above-styled case.

Respectfully submitted,

/s Mark R. Brown

Mark R. Brown (#81941)
303 East Broad Street
Columbus, OH 43215
Phone: (614) 236-6590
Fax: (614) 236-6956
mbrown@law.capital.edu

*Counsel for Intervenor-Plaintiff
Libertarian Party of Ohio*