



STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES
MEMBER OF CONGRESS
ELEVENTH DISTRICT, OHIO

December 8, 2004

Congressman John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Ranking Member:

I'm pleased that the Committee on the Judiciary is taking this important first step in seeking to unravel the Gordian knot of issues surrounding Ohio's 2004 election. While I regret not being able to be with you today, I join you in the commitment to pursue an aggressive review of all voting irregularities in Ohio. We all understand and are inspired by the legal, moral and fundamental principle to guard every citizen's *right to vote*.

As Co-Chair of the Democratic National Committee, John Kerry's landslide margin of victory - winning by well over 200,000 votes - was a particularly proud moment for Democrats and me here in Cuyahoga County. The 11th Congressional District includes about half of the county's 1,010,000 voters. While official comparative numbers are still being confirmed, it's our strong belief that the citizens of Cuyahoga County voted in record-breaking numbers. Frustrated voters at community forums, news reports and my own personal experience confirm an overwhelming demonstration of Election Day civic participation.

Today you will hear from voters and election day observers who will provide testimonies of confused and overwhelmed Poll workers, individuals waiting in the pouring rain for hours and hours as well instances of voting machine failures. Even with a diligent preparation effort, the infrastructure of the Board of Elections was stretched to capacity and beyond. The nexus between inadequate Poll worker training and an alarmingly high Provisional ballot rejection rate of 34% overall and as high as 51% in the City of Cleveland warrants careful study. To probe these and other data related questions I commend the work of the Greater Cleveland Voter Registration Coalition as being both reliable and truly independent.

The flurry of lawsuits in the months and days leading up to, including and following Election Day have all of us - voters and election officials alike - living in a kind of *purple haze* reality. Election related cases focused on: the distribution and access to Provisional ballots, the role of Poll challengers, the paper weight of the voter registration form, the responsibility to inform ex-offenders of their right to vote and now the Recount cases.

The appropriateness and even the legality of individuals simultaneously holding top policy and political positions must also be the subject of serious review. Secretary of State and chief elections officer, Kenneth Blackwell also served as Ohio's Co-Chair for the re-election of the Bush Cheney ticket. Cuyahoga County Board of Elections Chair, Robert Bennett is also the Chair of the Ohio Republican Party. The real and perceived conflicts in these policy and the political roles became more and more obvious during the run-up to the Presidential election. So much so, that the day before the Election the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor issued a ruling that forbade Mr. Bennett from holding both positions. Undeterred, Mr. Bennett continues to serve in the two roles.

Mr. Ranking Member, our efforts to sift through and sort out voting irregularities here in Ohio, Cuyahoga County and the 11th Congressional District will continue. In the coming months I will be in touch with the Board of Elections. My ongoing objective is to gather critical information and facilitate communication between and among stakeholders committed to the preserving the integrity of the individual right to vote.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephanie Tubbs Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Stephanie Tubbs Jones
Member of Congress