





A legislative update from House Minority Leader  
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**From the desk of Leader Sykes**

Dear Neighbor,

No matter where they come from or who they vote for, most Ohioans want a seamless and accessible voting process. That's why my Democratic colleagues and I have supported modernizing Ohio's voting laws to improve participation and ensure every Ohioan has a say in their government.

But last month, Republicans introduced House Bill (HB) 294, which would take us in the wrong direction by rolling back ballot access and making the process more confusing to voters. HB 294 is one of 400 anti-voter bills across the country introduced this year, and is modeled after bills recently passed in Georgia and other states.

HB 294 would:

- 1) Restrict ballot drop boxes,
- 2) Reduce the number of days of early voting,
- 3) Shorten mail ballot access by a week,
- 4) Write into law more reasons to throw away ballots.

During the bill's first hearing, Republican leaders abruptly ended testimony as its Republican sponsors were fielding questions from our Democratic members. This bill is too important to limit debate and silence the legitimate concerns of everyday Ohioans who will be impacted by this legislation.

In response, Democrats announced the Freedom To Vote Tour, our effort to bring discussion of this bill to the people. You can register to speak during this tour or learn more about how you can take action against HB 294 by visiting [OhioAntiVoterBill.com](http://OhioAntiVoterBill.com).

**Friday, June 4, 2021 from 10am-12pm**  
**Alpha Phi Alpha Center**  
**662 Wolf Ledges Parkway, Akron, Ohio 44311**

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at [Rep34@ohiohouse.gov](mailto:Rep34@ohiohouse.gov) or 614-466-3100.

Sincerely,

House Minority Leader  
Emilia Strong Sykes

## JUNETEENTH



Each year on **June 19**, we celebrate Juneteenth to commemorate the ending of slavery in the U.S. Although the Emancipation Proclamation became official in 1863, it wasn't until June 19, 1865 when word finally reached the rest of the country that the Civil War was over and that enslaved people were free.

Jubilation ensued, and since then, Black Americans celebrated this annual event. A century and a half later, Juneteenth is slowly becoming mainstream, with 47 states, including Ohio, recognizing this day as an observed holiday.

Juneteenth is a celebration of Black American freedom and achievement. It's an opportunity to learn about Black history and to give our respect and appreciation to those who paved the road for us today.

For more information about Juneteenth, visit [www.Juneteenth.com](http://www.Juneteenth.com).

Sign up for Leader Sykes' email list at <https://ohiohouse.gov/members/emilia-strong-sykes/newsletter-sign-up>

## House Democrats call for action on the Ohio Fairness Act this Pride Month

This LGBTQ+ Pride Month, House Democrats are calling for action on the Ohio Fairness Act, bipartisan legislation that would protect LGBTQ+ Ohioans from discrimination in employment, housing and accommodations.

The legislation was introduced yet again as House Bill 208 by Democrats in March 2021 and was referred to the House Commerce and Labor Committee, but has yet to receive a committee hearing.

Currently, qualified and competent employees can lose their jobs because of who they are or whom they love. Ohio should be a welcoming place to attract and retain the most talented



workers. Passage of the Ohio Fairness Act fulfills the Ohio Promise as it will make Ohio a welcoming place to live, raise a family, work and retire.

In June 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that LGBTQ+ workers are protected from workplace discrimination under federal law. The Ohio Fairness Act goes further by expanding LGBTQ+ protections to include not just employment, but also housing and services in Ohio.

Democrats have also previously introduced legislation which would protect minors by prohibiting certain licensed health care professionals from engaging in conversion therapy when treating minor patients.

## House Democrats renew calls to root out corruption, restore integrity of the People's House

House Democrats held a press conference last month to announce a resolution to remove Rep. Larry Householder (R-Glenford) from office and to discuss other Democratic legislation that would root out corruption and begin to restore integrity to the Ohio House. After Democrats announced the press conference, House Republicans rushed to introduce an expulsion resolution of their own.

Householder and several close associates were arrested in July 2020 and subsequently indicted for their alleged role in a \$60 million public bribery scheme, currently the largest open corruption investigation in any statehouse in the nation.

Democrats also called for hearings on a number of Democratic-sponsored anti-corruption bills which have been blocked by Republican Committee Chairs since their introduction earlier this year.

The Ohio Anti-Corruption Act would require the dark money groups like the ones implicated in the House Bill 6 scandal to identify their contributors and disclose their spending.

The legislation would strengthen transparency and accountability so that dark money and corruption cannot subvert the will of the people.

In addition to the Ohio Anti-Corruption Act, Democrats urged action on the Public Corruption Repayment Act, legislation which would require members of the General Assembly to reimburse the state for any and all compensation received between the time they were indicted for a felony involving public corruption and their conviction. Neither anti-corruption measure has had a hearing in the House.



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