Each of us must take a stand. We must continue to combat the forces that aim to “shave points” by frustrating the turn-out of targeted population groups in order to win an election. Understand your rights as voters and promote early voting efforts.

Voting, the most fundamental right in our democracy, has been continuously threatened by partisan politics throughout the United States. Here, in the battleground state of Ohio, the right to vote has been under attack since 2011 and the road to the polls continuously barricaded. From laws that frustrate or intimidate, to tactics that disenfranchise, the journey to Election Day 2012 has been one that will not soon be forgotten.

But on October 2, 2012, Ohio saw its first victory with the commencement of early voting, another right that has been repeatedly challenged on this tumultuous trip. I’m happy to report that nearly 19,000 people voted that day in Cuyahoga County compared to 570 on the first day of early voting in 2008.

This is crucial since the voter suppression bandwagon has raced acrossAmerica, riding in the vehicle of over 180 restrictive bills in 41 states nationwide. InOhio, our Secretary of State John Husted joined other Republican elected officials in passing legislation to halt early and weekend voting and denied local boards of election the option of sending out absentee ballots to all registered voters as well as pay for return postage as they deem appropriate.

At the next stop, the Secretary attempted to remove two Montgomery County elections officials from their positions for disagreeing with the egregious and restrictive laws Husted was attempting to enact.

Driven by the mostly Republican controlled legislatures which have guided these systematic attacks on access to the ballot box, their newly enacted voting laws and our rights have collided in court. In the state of Ohio alone, 500,000 constituents have been removed from our registry. The aggressive removal of names from the voter rolls in our country is outrageous. All elections boards have a responsibility to update the rolls but in too many cases, constituents are removed without their knowledge or approval and, upon reaching the polls, are surprised to learn their decision has been taken away without their knowledge. It's time to remember where you came from and mobilize.

The state ofOhioand our country have a bumpy road ahead. With many restrictive voting laws and complicated registration practices still in place, our citizens remain vulnerable. The disproportionate impact on our youth, minorities, the poor, and the elderly is real. This election is personal. The next president will shape the direction of federal policies and programs that will profoundly affect most of us and our families for generations.

Each of us must take a stand. We must continue to combat the forces that aim to "shave points" by frustrating the turn-out of targeted population groups in order to win an election. Understand your rights as voters and promote early voting efforts. While two federal courts have now orderedOhioto restore voting on the last three days before the election, Sec. Husted has refused to implement a schedule pending an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In other words, we cannot assume that those final days of voting will be available while the legal challenges continue, so be please be prepared to vote at some other time. The most important thing we can do is to vote and encourage all who are eligible to participate. Let's take the wheel back from the forces behind restrictive voting practices and place our country back on the road to democracy.