



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WISCONSIN
EDUCATION FUND**

122 State Street, #201A
Madison, WI 53703-2500

Phone: (608) 256-0827
Fax: (608) 256-1761

<http://www.lwwwi.org>
lwwwisconsin@lwwwi.org

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 17, 2011**

CONTACT: Andrea Kaminski, Executive Director
608-256-0827; kaminski@lwwwi.org

Fast-Tracking of Voter ID Raises a Red Flag
By Andrea Kaminski

Proponents of voter ID are fast-tracking a bill that will not solve a problem, but will cost taxpayers money and keep many eligible citizens from voting. The absurdity of their arguments gives reason to be suspicious of their motives. At the very least we need to know what this will cost.

In a column released Friday Senator Mary Lazich, chair of the Senate elections committee, claimed that in the 2008 election "Wisconsin endured an onslaught from the so-called community organization group ACORN. Two members of ACORN, and Wisconsin residents, have subsequently been found guilty of election fraud."

The truth is that proponents of voter ID still cannot point to a single case of voter impersonation, which is the only kind of fraud that *could* be prevented by a photo ID requirement. The deputy registrars she mentioned were caught and prosecuted by the current system.

Senator Lazich claimed that people routinely use an ID to cash checks, buy alcohol, drive a car, and "spend the night at the Rescue Mission." She noted that for those without an ID, the new law "may provide" an ID free of charge. She is not making any promises, because the bill is written to stop providing free ID as soon as the federal Real ID Act goes into effect.

Citizens do not have a constitutional right to cash checks, buy alcohol or drive a car, but we do have a constitutional right to vote. The people who do not currently have ID are the very people for whom it is most difficult and costly to obtain it. Think of the single, low-income working mother with no car who cannot go the DMV and stand in line for 2 hours; the disabled person who must arrange special transport well in advance and who cannot ask the vehicle to wait indefinitely while he waits in line; the elderly person who grew up in the south and has no birth certificate, just a notation in the family Bible.

"Application of the new law is more complicated than one may think," Senator Lazich cautioned.

Well, she got that right! The Government Accountability Board will need to train local election officials and educate voters on the new procedures. Some citizens will need to apply for and receive copies of their birth certificates, a process that can take more than a month. The DMV will have to respond to an increased demand for IDs.

"I support fast-tracking voter ID so that it is in place for the election this coming April. I am told that we will experience a roughly 15 percent turnout in April," the Senator went on.

If this law is in place by April, our next Supreme Court justice will be elected by even less than 15 percent of the electorate. With people already questioning the legitimacy of our judicial elections, that can only hurt.

In fast-tracking this bill, it appears that proponents do not think they will have to run it by the Joint Finance Committee or work it into the state budget. That raises a red flag. According to previous

estimates, there will be a significant cost for state and local governments – upwards of \$2.3 million annually. Taxpayers deserve to see a credible fiscal estimate before the legislature votes on this bill.

Fast-tracking the bill belies the claim that its purpose is to improve the integrity of our elections. If voter ID is so important, it is worth the time to do it right. Otherwise, this bill is no more than a transparent effort to suppress the vote.

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