

A Report on Photo ID for Voting Purposes

ISACA Photo ID Exploratory Committee

Photo ID Exploratory Committee

Following the November 2010 General Election, then-Secretary of State-Elect Matt Schultz met with the executive officers and legislative liaisons of the Iowa State Association of County Auditors (ISACA). In that meeting in late November Schultz stated a clear intention to pursue vigorously a change in the law requiring voters at the polls to show a photo identification.

In early December, the ISACA legislative liaisons tried unsuccessfully to schedule meetings before the end of the year with Indiana and Missouri election officials to study their photo ID requirements. At the ISACA Executive Board meeting on January 5, 2011, President Holly Fokkena formally appointed a six-member bipartisan committee to study photo ID requirements in two other states. Directly prior to that meeting, staff in the Secretary of State's office agreed to withhold introduction of its photo ID legislation in Iowa until the committee published its findings. ISACA agreed to provide copies of the committee's final report to the Secretary, Governor, and members of the Legislature immediately after distribution to the ISACA members.

Voter ID / photo ID in other states

Twenty-eight states require voters to show some form of ID to vote, eight of which require the more restrictive photo ID, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. For study purposes, the committee selected Florida and Indiana, two states that have had photo ID requirements for at least three general elections. In the three weeks following its creation, the committee traveled to each state to meet face-to-face with both county and state election officials. The intent of the in-person meetings was to gain a richer understanding of the law; how it came into being, its evolution, interpretation, and day-to-day application by county election administrators and precinct officials. In each of the two states the committee spent a day meeting with state and county election officials.

Mission

Through numerous discussions, the committee decided that it would not make a recommendation to approve or disapprove adoption of photo ID legislation in Iowa. The committee described its mission as follows:

- to define the two states' election laws, as well as the principles behind them, and the administrative processes that implement them
- to evaluate those processes from an administrative viewpoint, and to make written recommendations to the Legislature, Governor, and Secretary of State on their possible effective and efficient implementation in Iowa

Summary of recommendations

The committee members take pride in serving as election administrators in a state with good laws and a strong history of fair and impartial elections. We respect and appreciate the difficult jobs of the legislators and governor, and we ask those people to weigh this information and changes to those laws with care.

If the Iowa Legislature and Governor determine that requiring a photo ID to vote is in the public interest, then we make the following recommendations, based upon our research into the photo ID requirements in the states of Florida and Indiana:

Plan for implementation

The state must thoroughly plan for implementation of any photo ID requirement. To be effective, the state must include both advocates and opponents at the table, as well as county election officials. In Indiana, it was a group formed through such an inclusive process that created the administrative procedures and public education initiatives, thereby helping to avoid disenfranchisement of voters and lessen the chance of a successful constitutional challenge.

Voter education / outreach

For a photo ID requirement to be successful, a significant financial investment by the State is required to educate voters of the photo ID requirement on an ongoing basis. The program should use a multi-media approach and should target people who do not have acceptable photo IDs, including college students and poor, elderly, and/or disabled voters. With new voters registering every year, especially during the general election years, this financial commitment must be ongoing, and not just during initial implementation.

Provide free photo ID and free birth certificate for voting purposes

In order to avoid disenfranchisement of voters and to withstand court challenges to the constitutionality of a photo ID law on the basis of a financial burden or poll tax, Iowa must provide free photo IDs for voting purposes and free certified birth certificates necessary to acquire the photo IDs. The state should be inclusive in determining standards to qualify for a free photo ID and free certified birth certificate.

Plan for litigation expenses

Many states' photo ID requirements have been challenged in court and have been upheld. Even with careful and deliberate planning, however, some states have incurred significant litigation costs. It would be fiscally responsible for Iowa to budget for potential litigation costs, if and when the state passes legislation requiring photo IDs to vote.

Resolve the "Catch-22" problem for certain voters

Iowa should tackle the "Catch-22" situation in which a voter needs a certified birth certificate in order to obtain a free photo ID, but needs a photo ID in order to obtain a certified birth certificate. Iowa law currently allows limited exceptions to obtain a certified birth certificate, and the state needs to find other solutions.

Not addressing this problem creates an unintended consequence that is directly contradictory to the reason most often given for adoption of photo ID requirements – security of the election process. County clerks in Indiana say what happens there is that some people “go around” the requirement and vote an absentee ballot by mail, a method that has no ID requirements. Since mailed absentee ballots are already the area of the election process that is most prone to voter fraud, this “go-around” actually opens the election process to greater potential for voter fraud.

Improve integration between I-VOTERS and DOT databases

Recognizing that an Iowa Driver’s License would be the most frequently used form of identification at the polls, improved integration between I-VOTERS (Iowa’s state-wide voter registration and absentee voter management system) and the Department of Transportation gains importance.

Department of Transportation registrations comprise more than 50% of new registrations in Iowa. Adopting a standardized street file between I-Voters and the DOT will allow a more accurate and efficient transfer of the voter registration data that we currently receive. Iowa does not currently transmit signatures from the Department of Transportation to the I-VOTERS database. Including the digitized signature that the DOT already collects with the registration transmittal will give County Auditors an additional tool to manage the security of the election processes. The I-VOTERS system does not currently support management and administration of a signature verification process.

Looking to the future, by utilizing the technological capabilities of Precinct Atlas® (electronic pollbook), and a magnetic strip reader, voters could be processed accurately and efficiently at the polls with a single swipe of the magnetic strip on the driver’s license.

Members of the ISACA Photo ID Exploratory Committee

Janine Sulzner, Jones County Auditor, ISACA Past President, Committee Chair
Eric Van Lancker, Clinton County Auditor, ISACA Secretary-Treasurer
Joell Deppe, Jackson County Auditor, ISACA 6th District President
Ken Kline, Cerro Gordo County Auditor, ISACA Legislative Liaison
Dennis Parrott, Jasper County Auditor, ISACA Legislative Liaison
Gloria Carr, Floyd County Auditor, ISACA Elections Standing Committee (Indiana trip only)
Dawn Williams, Marshall County Assistant Auditor (Florida trip only)

Indiana – Meetings with state and local officials

On January 25, 2011, the committee met briefly with Indiana Secretary of State Charlie White and Deputy Chief of Staff Sean Keefer. The committee then met at length with J. Bradley King, Co-Director of the Indiana Elections Division and R. Dale Simmons, Co-Legal Counsel for the Secretary of State. The committee later met at length with the county clerks listed below. Present at and participating in each of the meetings was HAVA Outreach Coordinator Jeremy Burton. The number after each county shows the county's approximate number of registered voters.

Beverly Elliott	LaGrange County	15,132
Peggy Mayfield	Morgan County	44,799
Steve Craycraft	Delaware County	87,349
Beth White	Marion County	592,030
Jason McSherry	Kosciusko County	46,313
Beth Mulry	Brown County	12,201
JoAnn Stewart	Wayne County	44,531
Linda Moeller	Floyd County	54,855

Indiana – Origin of photo ID in Indiana

In Florida, an instance of “massive” voter fraud in absentee ballots resulted in its photo ID legislation. Although Indiana has had repeated – and in one case, massive – incidents of voter fraud in absentee voting in some areas of the state, it was not these problems that led to its passage. Instead, it was a “fiercely partisan” environment in which the Republicans – who controlled both houses of the legislature along with the governor’s office in 2005 – took it as “an article of faith” that requiring a photo ID for in-person voters was a necessary thing for the security and integrity of the election process.

On the other hand, the Democrats’ article of faith was that the photo ID requirements were unneeded and overly-restrictive, and would disenfranchise some voters. In response to their claim that Indiana’s voter fraud problems were only in absentee voting and that there was no voter fraud in the area of in-person voting, the Republicans countered, “We don’t have to wait for a problem to happen to take steps to prevent it.” The issue was so divisive that it caused a walk-out in the legislature.

Indiana – Impending court challenges

In 2005, many individuals and groups threatened lawsuits if the law was passed. The final version of the law was actually shaped in expectation of the impending litigation, as lawmakers and state and county officials drafted amendments that changed its form and content to withstand a possible constitutional challenge. One such amendment was the option for a person who has a religious objection to having a photograph taken to sign an affidavit to have his/her provisional ballot counted.

Indiana – “How will we administer this law?”

Despite the highly-charged partisan atmosphere, once the legislation had been signed into law, the Indiana Secretary of State convened a group of people that included both advocates and opponents, and asked them to set aside their philosophical differences. The group included representatives from the political parties, the secretary of state’s office, and county officials. Their two-part mission was to develop administrative and security procedures, including training materials and guidelines for county and precinct officials, and to craft a

voter education and outreach program that would prevent disenfranchisement of voters. “We didn’t want anyone surprised on Election Day,” according to one state official.

Indiana – Litigation and court decisions

The day after the Indiana photo ID bill was signed into law, a lawsuit was filed challenging its constitutionality. Additional lawsuits followed, and cases were eventually decided by the Indiana Supreme Court and the United States Supreme Court. In each decision the justices were divided. Both courts found that the complainants provided theoretical situations, but failed to provide even one witness who had been disenfranchised by the photo ID law. Further review and analysis of these court decisions is beyond the scope of this paper; nonetheless, they are important and instructive, and full copies are available via the web-links shown below.

- U.S. Supreme Court No. 07-21 Decided 04-28-2008
Crawford ET AL v Marion County Election Board ET AL
<http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/07pdf/07-21.pdf>

U.S. Supreme Court No. 07-25 Decided 04-28-2008
Indiana Democratic Party ET AL Petitioners v Todd Rokita, Indiana Secretary of State ET AL
[Same decision and pdf file as above](#)

- Indiana Supreme Court No. 49S02-1001-CV-50 Decided 06-30-2010
League of Women Voters of Indiana, Inc. and League of Women Voters of Indianapolis, Inc. v Todd Rokita, In His Official Capacity as Indiana Secretary of State
<http://auditors.iowacounties.org/Auditors/IndianaSupremeCourtRulingRegardingPhotoID.pdf>

Indiana – Voter outreach efforts

Indiana’s voter outreach program was “robust,” according to state officials, and its thrust was “to help people understand what they need to do.” Types of media included television, radio, newspaper, billboards, and posters in public transit systems, each of which included the theme, “Remember to bring your photo ID.” The secretary of state also provided media kits to the counties. One focus was college students, especially those who do not drive and do not have an Indiana, U.S., or military ID, and they were targeted through email lists provided by colleges and through websites commonly used by students. Efforts were not always successful, however, because although students may have student ID cards, the law in many cases was too restrictive to allow them to be used for voting purposes. A lot of students said, “Just forget it then,” according to one county clerk.

Overall, the state has invested “a tremendous amount of time, money, and effort” in its voter outreach programs, and local and state officials were universal in saying an ongoing campaign was critical to the implementation of the photo ID law. State officials add that it is important to target the areas where people are not likely to have the required photo ID, and that the robust voter education program is necessary to help withstand potential court challenges.

Indiana – Voter outreach funding

Since 2005, the State of Indiana has spent \$2.2 million for voter outreach and education efforts, including \$600,000 in 2010. Up until now, the state has used money from the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) grant program, in which the federal government funds 95% and requires a 5% state match. The state's HAVA funds are now exhausted, and it "will now go to all state funds." The state has budgeted zero dollars this year; however, 2011 is an "off-year," in which there are no regular elections scheduled. Also, unlike Iowa, Indiana law authorizes "very few" special elections. It is the desire of the Indiana election officials to request continued state funding from their legislature for voter outreach.

Indiana – Litigation costs / other costs

The major cost outside of the free photo ID and voter outreach program has been the multi-year litigation. Costs to counties for implementation of the photo ID law were minimal, except that some counties chose to add additional election workers. Another exception is Marion County, Indiana's largest county, which has had to budget each year for litigation costs. There, a lawyer has unsuccessfully sued the county each of the last four elections on the theory that he will eventually get a sympathetic judge.

Indiana – Initial implementation

Precinct officials had initial problems implementing the photo ID law, despite the State of Indiana sponsoring voter outreach efforts. One election clerk said that the first election "was tough," in that the voters were not expecting to show ID; in many cases they were "offended to be asked." On the other hand, many voters responded with, "I thought you did this all along." The great majority of those problems have dissipated since 2005 through a consistent application of the law and continued voter outreach and education efforts by the state. State officials say that the requirements are now so routine, that it is hard to remember the initial implementation challenges.

Indiana – Ongoing controversy / adjusting to change

Acceptance of Indiana's photo ID law has not been universal. One county election clerk had a precinct that refused to require photo IDs for the first two years. "They thought it was a stupid thing, and they didn't do it." Another clerk said that, "There's a lot of controversy in my county about how restrictive it is, and that remains true." The county clerk in Marion County, Indiana's most populous county, said repeatedly that she administers the photo ID requirements despite being "philosophically opposed" to them. The consensus of the county clerks was that they would like to see more types of ID be accepted, especially with regard to college students.

In the implementation of photo ID requirements in Indiana, local election officials conveyed the same message in various ways. One version was phrased by the Marion County, Indiana clerk, who said that despite a lot of fears, anxieties, and personal philosophical objection to the photo ID law, "the sun will come up tomorrow," and "you learn to make it work."

Indiana – Free photo IDs

For certain persons, Indiana provides free photo IDs from the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) for voting purposes. Each free ID is clearly labeled, "For Voting Purposes," and provision of the free IDs has also been cited in court challenges as a method to prevent

an undue burden on persons otherwise unable to pay for the ID, and to counter allegations of a poll tax. The Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles has calculated its cost at \$13 for each ID and has provided the following documentation of the costs incurred by the Bureau for providing the free IDs for voting purposes:

Year	# ID's	Cost
2007	175,300	\$ 2,278,900
2008	219,203	\$ 2,849,639
2009	208,250	\$ 2,707,250
2010	168,264	\$ 2,187,432
To date	771,017	\$ 10,023,221

Comparing Iowa's 2.1 million registered voters to Indiana's 4.3 million, and using the current Iowa charge of \$5.00 for a non-operator ID, an estimate of the annual cost of free photo IDs in Iowa would be:

84,132	number of free non-operator IDs
\$5.00	current charge for non-operator ID in Iowa
\$420,660	cost per year

If Iowa would offer free birth certificates in addition to free photo IDs, an estimate would be:

84,132	number of free birth certificates
\$15.00	current charge for certified birth certificate in Iowa
\$1,261,980	cost per year

Indiana includes administrative costs in the \$13 per ID amount; this paper does not attempt to estimate such administrative costs for Iowa, and actual amounts currently charged are used in the above estimates.

Indiana – “For heaven’s sake, I’m your mother”

Both state and local Indiana officials stressed the need for consistency in asking for a photo ID. This provides for some awkward moments when county and precinct officials ask for ID from good friends, immediate family members, or even spouses. However, the process should be constant and routine, “just another step in what you do,” according to one county clerk. The benefit of consistency is to pass tests for fairness, objectivity, and nondiscrimination, and county clerks say the rule needs to be applied even when a member of the county clerk’s office is voting.

Indiana – “Quality of life” issue

Indiana Secretary of State Charlie White says he believes that showing a photo ID to vote does more than provide security to elections, and that it is a “quality of life” issue. Obtaining a photo ID enhances a person’s ability to open a bank account or to apply for a job or government service. He said further that the rate of voter participation has increased in Indiana since the photo ID law was passed, suggesting that it has not suppressed voting.

Indiana – Provisional ballots

An in-person voter who does not show a photo ID in Indiana may cast a provisional ballot. The voter has until noon on the tenth day after the election to bring a photo ID into the county clerk's office. A voter who has a religious objection to having his/her photograph taken must come in during the 10-day period and sign an affidavit to that effect. Provisional ballots of voters who do either of the preceding will be counted; other provisional ballots caused by inability or refusal to show a photo ID are not counted.

County clerks indicate that most people who cast provisional ballots for lack of a photo ID do not come into their offices to "cure" the provisional and have it counted; the exception will sometimes be when the results in a particular race are so close that the ballot could affect the outcome of the race. Although secretary of state officials would like to see the 10-day period shortened, local officials said that many people who do come in, particularly the elderly and low-income, need that additional time in order to obtain a photo ID and/or to get transportation to the courthouse or local office of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

Indiana has about 4.3 million registered voters. There were 2,500 provisional ballots cast in the November 2010 General Election in Indiana. About half of those were determined to be valid. The state does not track statistics of the number of provisional ballots broken down by their causes; however, it was the consensus of the county clerks that most provisional ballots were for reasons other than photo ID, and that the number of provisional ballots did not increase significantly when photo ID was implemented.

Indiana – Absentee voting

The following absentee voters are not required to provide a photo ID:

- Voters who request absentee ballots by mail
- Voters in health care facilities such as nursing homes

The following absentee voters are required to show a photo ID:

- In-person absentee voters who vote at the county clerk's office
- In-person absentee voters who vote at a satellite absentee voting station

For an absentee ballot that is mailed to the voter, the voter must sign an affidavit listing one of 11 statutorily allowed reasons for casting the absentee ballot, as opposed to an in-person absentee voter who is not required to list a reason. Included in the photo ID law was a provision that increased the criminal penalty for absentee voting fraud.

Indiana – Signature verification – absentee voting

For the past 20 years – long before photo ID legislation – Indiana has required that the signature on the affidavit envelope on a mail-out absentee ballot be verified against the signature on the absentee ballot request form. Further verification of the signature on other voter registration records is permitted if there are questions.

Indiana – Signature verification – at the polls

A voter at the polls signs his/her name in the precinct register, next to a printed signature from the statewide voter registration database. The precinct official compares the two signatures to verify it is the same person. Precinct officials that use an electronic pollbook can view an electronic version of the voter's signature. Regardless of the format, the original

signature comes from the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles, which captures it in an electronic format and transmits it to the Secretary of State.

Indiana – Acceptable forms of photo ID

For in-person voters, Indiana law requires that the photo ID:

- 1) Display the voter’s photo.
- 2) Display the voter’s name, which must “conform” with the voter registration record.
- 3) Display an expiration date, and either be current, or have expired some time after the date of the last general election.
- 4) Be issued by the State of Indiana or the U.S. government

A manual containing photocopies of acceptable and unacceptable IDs is provided to precinct officials along with how each ID meets, or does not meet, the four criteria. Specific types that qualify include:

- U.S. passport
- U.S. military ID card
- U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs benefit card
- Indiana driver’s license
- Indiana Identification card (issued for voting purposes)
- Indiana University ID card

College IDs are accepted only if from a state college, and contains an expiration date. IDs from private colleges are not allowed, with the reasoning that the state neither controlled nor knew what standards were used to issue the IDs.

Indiana – Comparing the photo

Precinct officials are not trained on facial recognition, and are told to use common sense when looking at the photo on the ID and to approve it if the photo resembles the voter. This is the first step when a voter enters a polling place, and is required to be done before the voter signs his/her name in the precinct register. If the precinct official questions the veracity of the photo, a comparison is made of the signature on the photo ID with the signature printed on the precinct register. Precinct officials are trained to do a quick verification, and county clerks say the process has not significantly added to the time it takes to process a voter, except when the occasional precinct official is over-zealous in checking the ID. “We base it more on the signature comparison than the photo comparison,” according to one county clerk.

Indiana – Comparing the name

Indiana law requires the name on the photo ID to “conform” to the voter’s name on the precinct register, as opposed to “be identical.” Precinct officials are provided examples and trained to use common sense and accept variations of a voter’s name. For example, each of the names below would conform, according to the Indiana Secretary of State:

Robert John Crew
John Crew
Robert Crew
J. Crew

Bob John Crew
Robert J. Crew
Bob Crew

R. John Crew
Bob J. Crew
R. J. Crew

When a voter has recently changed his/her name, as can happen with a marriage or divorce, the voter's name on the photo ID and/or the precinct register may not be up-to-date. In this case the voter is simply required to complete a form to update the name for voter registration purposes.

Indiana – Expiration date

Indiana requires the photo ID to display an expiration date, which must either be current, or have expired after the date of the last general election. For example, a driver's license that expired in December 2008 would still be valid to use at the November 2010 general election. A legal opinion from the Indiana Elections Division was issued to allow certain military veteran IDs that have an expiration statement of INDEF (indefinite). That opinion has not been challenged.

Indiana – Precincts

Indiana has a statutory limit of 1,200 active voters per precinct. Iowa precincts are limited based on population. However, urban precincts in Iowa could have twice the number of voters allowed in an Indiana precinct.

Indiana – Catch-22

In order to obtain a free photo ID from the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV), a person must provide a certified birth certificate. This can be a major obstacle for people who were born out-of-state, who do not know where to obtain a birth certificate, or who simply do not drive or have a means of transportation. The real "Catch-22," however, is that in order to obtain a certified copy of a birth certificate, a person must have a photo ID. In short, the voter needs a birth certificate to obtain a photo ID, but needs a photo ID to obtain a birth certificate.

Indiana – Benefits of photo ID from the county clerks' perspective

Despite ongoing controversy and claims of disenfranchisement over the Indiana photo ID law, county clerks say it has had some positive effects, including the possible deterrence of voter fraud and more accurate, up-to-date voter rolls. Also, in an increasingly more mobile society, it helps identify new and unfamiliar voters to the precinct officials. One county clerk said that the photo ID requirement helped her withstand a court challenge. In that situation, the one precinct's officials decided that voters need not sign the precinct register, even though some voters questioned the officials. The election was upheld by the court, because the precinct officials administered the photo ID requirement for each voter.

Indiana – Concerns of disenfranchisement

County clerks say there are continuing court challenges and accusations of disenfranchisement of some voters, particularly college students who do not drive, who have out-of-state drivers' licenses, or who attend private colleges. Clerks say they have seen people who had difficulty obtaining a birth certificate, such as an individual who was adopted, or who was born out-of-state. They also say that voters leave polling places without casting ballots, due to the photo ID requirement. Others claim that transportation to BMV locations or locations to obtain birth certificates is a major obstacle for some voters. Several clerks said the photo ID requirement in Indiana has had a "chilling effect" on some voters, and expressed concern for the possible suppression of voting due to the inability of citizens to obtain the required photo ID. However, they add that suppression of voting is difficult to

quantify. Some county clerks say they have suggested to voters who are unable to obtain photo IDs to “find a reason to vote absentee by mail,” which carries no photo ID requirement.

Indiana – What they would like to see changed

County clerks say there are two areas they would like to see changed in Indiana law. The first is that the current law is overly-restrictive in the types of photo ID that are acceptable, especially with regard to college students. The second area is the “Catch-22” in which a person must have a photo ID to obtain a copy of a birth certificate, but need a birth certificate before obtaining a free photo ID from the BMV.

Florida – Meetings with state and local officials

On January 10, 2011, the committee met at length with Florida State Elections Director Don Palmer and briefly with Florida Secretary of State Kurt Browning. Throughout that day and evening, committee members met at length with several local elections officials attending the Florida State Association of Supervisors of Elections Mid-Year Winter Conference, including the persons listed below. The number after each county shows the county's approximate number of registered voters.

Vicki Davis, Supervisor of Elections, Martin County	102,000 registered voters
Bill Cowles, Supervisor of Elections, Orange County	622,154 registered voters
Brian Corley, Supervisor of Elections, Pasco County	300,218 registered voters
Nita Crawford, Supervisor of Elections, Baker County	14,004 registered voters
Liz P. Horne, Supervisor of Elections, Columbia County	40,201 registered voters
Susan Gill, Supervisor of Elections, Citrus County	98,279 registered voters
Jean Atkins, Director of Voter Administration, Duval County	529,871 registered voters
Tracie Collier, Director of Education, Duval County	

Florida – Origin of photo ID in Florida

Requiring voters to show a photo ID was one of a series of reforms in Florida election laws that resulted from mass absentee fraud in Miami/Dade County. At that time the absentee voting fraud was so prevalent that all absentee ballots were rejected out-of-hand.

Florida – Signature verification – backbone of process

Verification of each voter's signature is the backbone of the Florida voter ID process. Each voter's signature is verified, regardless of whether the voter is voting at the polls, voting an early or absentee ballot, or casting a provisional ballot. Signature verification was required in Florida long before the 2002 Help America Vote Act and before photo ID requirements for people voting at the polls on Election Day. Since the requirement of presenting a photo ID was added to Florida law, precinct workers are required to compare both the signature and the photo on the ID. If a voter does not have an ID with both a signature and ID on it, they may present 2 different IDs. The benefit of an across-the-board signature verification requirement is that it provides a level standard for voters regardless of the method they choose to vote.

Florida – Signature verification – voting in-person

Precinct officials and county election staff are told that they are not signature experts, and are trained to be "liberal" in verifying voters' signatures. This applies to both in-person early voting and voting at the polls on Election Day. Local officials and one state official said that in reality, many workers match the photo to the voter, as opposed to verifying the signature, because it is quicker.

Florida – Absentee voting by mail

Florida's laws are similar to Iowa's in that a voter can submit a written request to have an absentee ballot mailed to the voter, and the voter is not required to provide a reason or excuse for the absentee request. After marking the ballot the voter inserts it into an affidavit envelope and signs the affidavit. The canvassing board will verify the voter's signature on the affidavit against the voter's signature on file in the voter registration database.

Representatives of the two major political parties are present while the canvassing board members carry out their duties.

Florida – Updating signatures

Recognizing that a voter's signature can change over time, state and local officials in Florida actively educate voters to update their signatures. This means completing a voter registration form, from which the recent signature is captured and stored electronically. Local officials work with health care facilities to ensure that residents' signatures get updated.

Florida – Voter registration

Florida voter registration laws are similar to Iowa's, in that the voter is required to provide the Florida driver's license number or the last four digits of the social security number. The number is then matched against the state's driver's license database to confirm that it is a real person. This one-to-one match-up is a solid foundation for the voter registration and election processes. State officials say that a good working relationship with the Florida department of Motor Vehicles is vital to the process, providing access to each voter's data, photo, and electronic signature. One official says the upfront voter registration process does more to protect the integrity of the election than the photo ID requirement at the polls.

Florida – Provisional ballots

When a voter does not have a photo ID at the polls, the voter casts a provisional ballot. If the voter's information matches the voter registration database, then the canvassing board verifies the voter's signature on the provisional ballot envelope to the voter's signature on file. If the two signatures match, then the provisional ballot is counted. In other words, the voter is not required to supply additional identification documents, unlike Indiana which requires the voter to physically come to the county office and provide a photo ID before the voter's provisional ballot is counted. One local supervisor of elections says this is a procedure he would like to see changed. Matching the voter's information and verifying the signature could be done at the polling place, thereby eliminating the need for a provisional ballot.

Florida – Register for absentee voting

A voter in Florida who wishes to vote absentee must "register" for an absentee ballot, and must show ID to do so. If the voter registers for absentee by mail, the voter must submit a copy of the voter's ID. One benefit of "registering" to be eligible for an absentee ballot is that it provides the opportunity to obtain a current signature of the voter with which to compare to the voter's signature on the affidavit envelope.

Florida – Rejection of absentee ballots due to defects

When an absentee voter in Florida has made a mistake on the voter's affidavit envelope, such that the absentee ballot will be rejected, the law does not provide the voter with either notification or the opportunity to fix or cure the problem. This is true even when the problem is found weeks before the election.

Florida – Pre-clearance state

Florida is a "pre-clearance" state, which means that it has a past record of voter discrimination, and must have any election law changes pre-cleared by the U.S. Department of Justice before they are implemented. In response to a question as to whether the issue of

Florida not providing free photo IDs to voters was a burden to and created disenfranchisement of voters, Florida Election Director Don Palmer said that it was not a factor. This is because the foundation of Florida's ID requirements is not the photo ID, but the voter's signature. Even when the voter is unable to show a photo ID and casts a provisional ballot, the provisional ballot will be counted after verification of the voter's signature, without further photo ID requirements.

Florida – Implementation

Local officials say they did not have any major issues or problems when the photo ID requirement started in 2001, adding that people need to provide an ID for many purposes in their daily lives, even wondering why citizens shouldn't expect that for voting purposes as well. Florida statutes list the forms of acceptable ID, which is not exclusive to IDs issued by the state or federal governments. If the ID does not have both the photo and signature of the voter, then the voter can show an additional ID. Orange County Supervisor of Elections Bill Cowles says that the photo ID and signature verification processes have been in place for so long, that they have become almost automatic for election administrators.

Florida – Public education

State and local officials say that an "intense" public relations and voter education campaign was conducted to inform voters of the ID and verification requirements, and were unanimous in saying that a good public outreach effort is necessary to their effective implementation.