



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WISCONSIN EDUCATION NETWORK

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LEAGUE FILES VOTER ID LAWSUIT

MADISON: The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin Education Network today filed suit in Dane County Circuit Court, challenging Wisconsin's new voter ID law based on the state constitution. As a nonpartisan organization that encourages participation in government, the League is concerned about the many eligible citizens who will be disenfranchised by the new law. The League is working with attorneys Lester Pines and Susan Crawford of Cullen Weston Pines & Bach, LLP, to challenge the legislature's authority to enact the law.

"Founded by the suffragists who won the right to vote for women in 1920 after a decades-long struggle, the League of Women Voters believes voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed. We are appalled by the stories the League is hearing about the barriers people are facing in trying to obtain an acceptable ID," said Melanie G. Ramey, president of the Wisconsin League.

This challenge is different from lawsuits brought in other states against voter ID laws because it is based on the Wisconsin Constitution. The suffrage, or voting, portion of the state constitution defines who may vote (citizens, at least 18 years of age, residents of WI) and specifies the permitted subjects relating to suffrage on which the legislature may enact laws: defining residency; providing for voter registration; providing for absentee voting; excluding felons and persons adjudicated incompetent from suffrage; and extending the right of suffrage to additional persons.

"The Wisconsin Constitution only allows the legislature to exclude the two named classes from voting – felons and people ruled incompetent. The new law creates a third class of citizens who may not vote - people who do not have ID. This lawsuit challenges the legislature's authority to enact such a law," said Lester Pines,

"Some people say that you have to show ID to use the library, cash checks, and so on. That is very different than a right that is guaranteed by the constitution of the state or federal government. Those transactions are generally based on personal business decisions of companies or other entities. They are not rights of citizenship," Ramey said.

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin Education Network is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that promotes informed and active participation in government. Through member-led research, education and advocacy, the League works to improve public participation in the democratic process and to champion public policy goals that are beneficial to all. There are 16 local Leagues in Wisconsin. More information at www.lwvwi.org.

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