



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WISCONSIN

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405 Words

To the Editor:

Today, the Wisconsin Assembly will consider a proposed constitutional amendment that would require all voters to show a photo ID to vote. This is the proposal's second consideration; if it passes, it will go to voters on the ballot.

Let's put this issue to rest before wasting the paper and ink: this proposal **would not** improve our elections, but **would** prevent citizens from voting. Recent studies and common sense say the Legislature should kill this proposal immediately.

Allegations of widespread voter fraud do not hold up to investigation. There is no record of voters acting en masse to misidentify themselves or vote multiple times. There have been a very few honest mistakes - mistakes that photo IDs do not solve.

The New York Times¹ recently confirmed common sense fears: requiring photo IDs to vote keeps people from the polls. The United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC) has decisive statistics verifying that minorities are most affected by this barrier to voting. We have long understood that poll taxes and literacy tests are unfair: they keep specific, targeted populations from voting and lead to a farce of democracy in which only some are represented. Photo ID requirements work the same way.

Our democracy is founded on a sense of equality not reflected in this proposal. Those with low incomes or disabilities have the most difficulties obtaining an ID. Students and other mobile populations have a difficult time maintaining current IDs. These voters should not be punished. Voting should be an equal challenge for all, regardless of situation.

Finally, the constitution is no place to enshrine photo IDs. The Constitution changes slowly, through a complex process; technology changes by the second. Photo IDs may very well be obsolete by the time this proposal can be implemented.

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin opposes technology dependant constitutional amendments; they are a waste of legislators' and voters' time. We oppose legislation that keeps qualified citizens from voting; it is an attack our rights. And we oppose legislation based around nonexistent problems. Voter fraud in Wisconsin has never been substantiated and photo IDs would not fix any known errors.

Requiring a photo ID to vote is a proven method of keeping voters from the polls. That is a loss our democracy cannot afford. Our citizens have the right to vote; but our Legislature should not ask them to exercise that right on measures that do great harm and no good.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melanie G. Ramey".

Melanie Ramey, President
League of Women Voters of Wisconsin

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¹ "Lower Voter Turnout Is Seen in States That Require ID" by Christopher Drew, February 21, 2007