

PHOTO ID

The Wisconsin State Legislature has introduced many bills that would require a photo ID card for voting. The ones that reached Governor Doyle's desk were vetoed by him. Legislators are now attempting to introduce a constitutional amendment that would require every person presenting him or herself at the polls to present photo identification.

Our legislators are undeterred by the fact that in October of 2005 a Georgia judge blocked implementation of a similar law, holding that he believed the plaintiffs have a substantial likelihood of succeeding on the merits of their claims that the photo ID requirement is an unconstitutional burden on the right to vote and constitutes a poll tax.

Wisconsin legislators favoring this bill state that it will address the question of election fraud. In reality, it will not. The information below came from www.demos.org:

Voter fraud at polls is minimal and unlikely to change election outcomes.

- Implementation of restrictive polling place ID requirements creates added burdens for already harried poll workers, for miniscule gain. Data from the U.S. Department of Justice shows that while 196,139,871 votes have been cast in federal elections since October 2002, only 52 individuals have been convicted of federal voter fraud. Most of these convictions were for vote buying or for voter registration fraud, neither of which would be prevented by restrictive ID requirements at the polls.
- The Coalition on Homelessness & Housing in Ohio and the League of Women Voters Coalition found that, while more than 9,078,728 votes were cast in Ohio during the 2002 and 2004 elections, there were *only four* instances of ineligible people voting or attempting to vote in the state-approximately 0.00000044 percent of the total number of votes cast.

A far-ranging federal probe into allegations of fraud in Wisconsin uncovered no evidence of a conspiracy to influence the 2004 presidential election. U.S. Attorney Steve Biskupic's investigation resulted in charges against 10 formerly incarcerated individuals for voting illegally and against four others for voting twice. Of those four, three cases have been dispensed with without conviction; the fourth prosecution is still pending in court. By way of comparison, 2,997,007 votes were cast

Photo ID mandates do not address the concerns raised by proponents.

- Restrictive ID requirements may plausibly prevent fraudulent voting by individuals using false names, but these cases are extremely rare. Individuals who registered under fictitious names during the 2004 election--such as Mary Poppins and Dick Tracy--did not cast ballots and were caught by election officials prior to Election Day.
- Unscrupulous partisans *do* try to sway the results of high-stakes elections--through organized voter intimidation and vote suppression campaigns. These tried-and-true conspiracies can

prevent thousands of votes from being cast. Individual voter fraud is by comparison not only rare, but a high-cost/low-gain gamble. While the odd fraudulent voter risks detection by trained election officials, imprisonment and/or stiff fines, his sole vote is extremely unlikely to alter the outcome of any election.

- Stringent polling place ID requirements will not prevent vote-buying schemes, ballot tampering, voting by disfranchised felons or ineligible non-citizens, voting in multiple locations, or the abuse of absentee voting provisions.

Restrictive ID requirements risk disfranchising millions of Americans.

- The American Association of People with Disabilities estimates that more than 3 million Americans with disabilities do not possess a driver's license or state-issued photo ID.
- A University of Milwaukee study has found that approximately 23 percent of Wisconsin residents aged 65 and older do not have driver's licenses or photo identification, while fewer than 3 percent of Wisconsin students have driver's licenses showing their current address. The study also revealed that less than half of African-American and Hispanic adults (47 percent and 43 percent respectively) living in Milwaukee County have valid driver's licenses.
- AARP of Georgia estimates that about 153,000 Georgia seniors *who voted* in 2004 do not possess a government-issued photo ID. These Georgians could not have voted had the 2005 ID law been in effect.
- The 2001 Commission on Federal Election Reform estimated that 6 to 10 percent of voting-age Americans do not have a driver's license or state-issued photo ID--as many as 20 million eligible voters. The same report found that those who lack photo ID are disproportionately poor and urban.
- In 1994, the U.S. Department of Justice found that African Americans living in Louisiana were four to five times less likely to have government-issued photo ID than whites. These numbers are likely to have grown in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. A large percentage of those victimized by the storm have lost birth certificates, social security cards and all other government-issued documentation.