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EDUCATION FUND**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 29, 2008

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Response to Supreme Court Decision on Voter ID

The U.S. Supreme Court ruling Monday upholding Indiana's strict voter ID law was a blow for fair elections, and it should not be used to support restrictive measures in Wisconsin. We have a long tradition of free, fair and open elections in this state, and as a result we have one of the highest levels of voter participation in the country. We have a record of clean elections, with no evidence of impersonation at the polls. There is no reason to impose restrictive election laws, which invariably place a higher burden on certain groups of eligible citizens.

"Voter ID laws do not address any problem that exists with our election system, and they suppress voting. That's a net loss for democracy," said Andrea Kaminski, Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin.

Photo ID requirements disproportionately impact the elderly, poor, disabled and minority populations who may not have the same access to an ID that others take for granted. In 2003, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation estimated that approximately 130,000 people of voting age across the state did not have a driver's license, and that only 20% of these people would ever obtain the necessary documentation if it was required. Claims that the IDs would be made available at no cost are misleading. Individuals who do not currently have a government-issued photo ID are more likely than the general population not to have the underlying documentation needed to obtain such an identification card.

"Just because the Supreme Court says a bad policy is constitutional doesn't mean legislatures should adopt it," said Mary Wilson, President of the League of Women Voters of the United States. "The League of Women Voters will be fighting against these limitations on democracy in the states and, when necessary, in Congress," she said.

The League of Women Voters has long believed that the best way to improve elections is to provide the resources needed to have better management as well as enhanced recruitment, training and compensation of poll workers. This is exactly what was done in Milwaukee following the 2004 election, and the result has been a Fall 2006 election and Spring 2008 elections with high turnout and very few problems. Let us use positive solutions to improve elections without disenfranchising voters.

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LWVWI Education Fund is a nonprofit, nonpartisan political organization that promotes informed and active participation in government. Through member-led research, public education and direct advocacy, the League works to improve public participation in the democratic process and to champion public policy goals that are beneficial to all.