

ACTION ALERT

March 19, 2009

From: Andrea Mulrine, President
Lora Lavin, Vice President for Issues & Action
Re: **Oppose Voter ID Bill (SB 514) Immediately**

The letter below has been **hand-delivered this morning** by our staff to members of the Senate State Government Committee (list attached). The letter asks the committee not to report out SB 514 (also attached), a very bad voter ID bill at its meeting next week (Tuesday). Check the attached list to see if your Senator is on the committee because his/her letter indicates that local Leagues in their district have been copied. We need each of you to contact your Senator with a letter or e-mail, followed up by a phone call today so that they can hear from their constituents who oppose this bill. The letter follows:

March 18, 2009

The Honorable Charles McIlhinney, Chair
Senate State Government Committee
187 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Subject: Free and fair elections are the hallmark of a healthy democracy.

Dear Chairman McIlhinney:

The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania stands strongly opposed to Senate Bill 514 and we ask the Senate State Government Committee **not** to report it out of committee.

Driving, buying cigarettes or alcohol, or boarding airplanes are all examples of actions requiring ID that even an elementary school student would recognize not to be Constitutional rights. Yet, in order to make a case for Voter ID these same activities have been inappropriately compared to

voting—the most fundamental Constitutional right of American citizens which **must be guaranteed**. A man who attended a recent state's rights rally in the State Capitol remarked that he worries about government intrusions and commented that government "has legislated almost all of our rights away." Rather than creating barriers to the franchise the General Assembly needs to focus on meaningful election reform proposals that would increase voter participation.

Photo ID is a political solution in search of a problem. Supporters of Senate Bill 514 claim voter identification is needed to prevent alleged voter fraud. **Show us the fraud!** Proponents of voter ID failed to document a single instance in which the outcome of a Pennsylvania election was affected by individuals posing as registered voters.

A search for the "thousands" of alleged fraudulent voters in Washington State uncovered six instances of double voting. Some in the Ohio Statehouse had alleged widespread voter fraud and abuse in 2004. Yet a survey of Ohio's 88 counties released by the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio and the League of Women Voters on June 14, 2005 found that of the 9 million votes cast there were but four instances of ineligible or fraudulent voting in the state's 2002 and 2004 general elections.

Senate Bill 514's ID requirement is synonymous with a poll tax and a step backward for voting rights in Pennsylvania. It would require every voter to show some form of acceptable photo ID every time they vote. Under SB 514, forms of non-photo ID which are now an acceptable alternative to photo ID for new voters, would only be acceptable if shown along with a photo ID. The tens of thousands of Pennsylvanian's without an acceptable form of photo ID would be required to get one in order to vote. This requirement creates two classes of voters – those who have acceptable ID because they are employed, drive, go to school, or travel outside the US, or are in the military and those who fall in none of these categories.

The issue would not be about whether individuals can prove their identity, but rather whether they can produce an acceptable form of identification.

Among those who could be affected are:

- **Senior citizens and the poor**
- **Thousands of Pennsylvanians aged 18-24** who do not have photo ID with current address and name.
- Pennsylvania's community of **100,000 Pennsylvanians with disabilities** who live in nursing homes, personal care facilities, and group homes almost never have many of the acceptable forms of identification such as a valid student ID, employee ID, gun permit, current utility bill, bank statement, valid driver's license or US passport.
- **Women** whose only proof of citizenship documents do not reflect their current name

What about people who forget their ID? While they could vote by provisional ballot, they would later need to go to the county board of elections with their ID in order to have their ballot cast. Again, those most affected would be people who do not have ready access to transportation or would have to take time off from work or care-giving duties to travel to the election board.

Requiring every voter to show an ID imposes additional burdens on poll workers. They will have to learn what kinds of identification are acceptable then explain to some voters why the produced identification is not acceptable. This will slow down voting and create long lines producing an environment for selective enforcement and voter intimidation. Pennsylvania's SURE system is already in place and will more effectively reduce the potential for voter fraud. The Statewide Uniform Registry of Electors (SURE) was established to prevent voter fraud by providing for the elimination of duplicate registrations and facilitating the purging of election rolls.

Enacting laws affecting the most fundamental right of citizens, the right to vote, deserve at a minimum public airing and careful consideration by the entire General Assembly.

Sincerely,

Andrea Mulrine
President

