



Joint Press Statement on Voter Photo ID (SB14)
February 28, 2011
Texas Capitol

**OPPOSE NEW VOTER ID REQUIREMENTS:
TEXAS DOESN'T NEED A COSTLY NEW GOVERNMENT PROGRAM THAT
MAY DISENFRANCHISE CITIZENS AND SUPPRESS VOTER TURNOUT**

Our organizations have come together to call on the Texas Legislature to reject costly, unnecessary legislation requiring legitimate voters to provide additional identification when they go to vote.

At a time when drastic budget cuts to education and other crucial programs are under consideration, the last thing Texas needs is a new government program that would disenfranchise many legitimate voters and cause confusion at the polls while also adding to budget problems at state and local levels.

Texas ranked 50th, last among all states, in turnout of the voter eligible population for the 2010 elections. Texas needs increased voter turnout, not government action that further suppresses citizen participation.

Don't Impose a Costly Government Solution for a Nonexistent Problem

According to the Bill Analysis, SB 14 is intended to address a "potential loophole" in existing law that might result in problems. Voter impersonation is the only potential problem that could be addressed by requiring all voters to provide photo ID to prove their identity.

The good news is that current Texas voter identification procedures work, and there is no evidence of voter impersonation in Texas. There is no need for costly programs to provide photo IDs, establish new procedures, educate voters on new requirements, and train poll workers on new identification procedures.

Costs of implementing photo ID requirements in other states that have been substantial. Indiana, which has only about 1/4 the population of Texas, spent over \$10 million in the first four years just to provide photo IDs for voting purposes. There are, of course, additional costs to educate voters (an additional \$2.2 million in Indiana), re-train poll workers and elections officials, and defend the state against legal challenges. Estimated costs for implementation are \$6 million for the first year in Missouri, and \$18-25 million for the first three years in North Carolina.

Rather than proposing government programs for hypothetical problems, we can shift our attention to the many very real and well documented problems in Texas.

Don't Disenfranchise Citizens

Texans understand that democracy requires active citizen involvement, and no form of involvement is more important than voting. The universal suffrage we take pride in today was achieved by those who persisted over decades against the odds. Texas should not turn back the clock by creating barriers that disenfranchise Texas citizens and needlessly limit voting rights.

For those who already have a state-issued photo ID that would allow them to vote, photo ID requirements may seem innocuous. However, many Texan citizens do not have one of the limited forms of ID required by SB 14. Based on the percentage of Texas citizens who register to vote without providing DPS identification, there may be 1 million or more voting eligible Texans without DPS photo ID. There are significant barriers to obtaining and maintaining a current photo ID for many Texas citizens, including young people, seniors, minorities, people with disabilities, students from out-of-state, and those with low incomes. The burden will be greatest for citizens who do not have the required documentation for an ID or for whom it is cost prohibitive or difficult to take off work, get transportation, stand in line, and apply for a photo ID.

Provisions in SB 14 for voters who turn 70 before Jan. 1, 2012, those with disabilities, and those with recently expired IDs or minor discrepancies between ID and voter registration do not completely address the fundamental problems of disenfranchisement.

Don't Create Confusion and Suppress Voter Turnout

Many of us field questions during elections. We know Texas voters are often confused about requirements and discouraged from voting when they do not understand the process. New photo ID requirements complicate voting requirements and increase the time it will take to verify registration when a voter goes to the polls. This will further decrease the dismal turnout of eligible voters in Texas.

Texas Should Make It Easier for Citizens to Vote

Texas should make it easier for citizens to vote-- not add costly restrictions and obstacles that will negatively impact all voters.

Photo ID legislation is a prime example of wasteful use of taxpayers' money. Spending precious taxpayer dollars on a new government program, when our state has effective identification procedures already in place, will be seen by voters for what it really is-- politics as usual at a time when essential state government services are being cut.

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