



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS

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HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON VOTER IDENTIFICATION AND VOTER FRAUD SB 14 MARCH 1, 2011

LWV opposes SB 14.

For the 90+ years since women gained the right to vote, LWV has educated and agitated for active, informed participation in government. No form of citizen participation is more important than voting so LWV has long fought against unnecessary barriers to voting.

To close a "*potential* loophole," SB 14 would restrict acceptable identification a voter must present to a limited list of photo IDs and provides for criminal penalties. Many of those registered or eligible to register to vote in Texas do not have any of the photo IDs specified 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.

Of those without a driver's license, it is estimated that more than 70% are women and over one-third are seniors. Unless they happen to have a less common form of acceptable ID, these individuals, including any who turn 70 after January 1, 2012, will have to secure and keep current an acceptable ID just to maintain the right to cast a ballot. Obtaining and renewing a photo ID would, of course, be most difficult for those who do not drive and do not already have the supporting documents to obtain an ID.

SB 14 gives voters new reasons to worry that discrepancies between ID and the precinct list would disqualify them from voting a regular ballot. Discrepancies in name tend to be more common for women who may change their name if they marry, divorce or remarry.

There is no evidence that pollsite voter impersonation, the only potential problem addressed by a photo ID requirement, is a problem in Texas. The real problem is low voter turnout. Texas ranked 50th among the states in voter turnout in 2010. No state had lower turnout than Texas.

Each election LWV fields questions that show Texas voters are often discouraged from voting because they don't understand requirements. SB 14 would add obstacles for legitimate voters and increase uncertainties that discourage legitimate voters from going to the polls.

Stricter voter identification requirements that would disenfranchise many and decrease voter turnout are not what Texas needs. Further, implementing these needless requirements would involve expensive, new government programs to provide and renew photo IDs for voting, educate voters, train election workers, process additional absentee and provisional ballots, and defend against legal challenges.

As Texas faces a major fiscal crisis, we should not squander taxpayers' money on expensive, intrusive, unnecessary, new government programs for hypothetical problems. Our limited resources must be used to meet real needs of Texans and invest in the future of our great state.