



**PUBLIC HEARING
SB 362, HB 2335, HB 3556
HOUSE ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
April 7, 2009**

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I am Anita Privett representing the League of Women Voters of Texas.

I am pleased to be here today to express the League's support for full voting participation by all eligible American citizens and our opposition to efforts to create new barriers that block citizen voter participation. We believe that SB 362, HB 2335 and HB 3556, would turn back the clock and erect unnecessary barriers to Texas voters. We want to be very clear. These are bad bills.

For more than 89 years the League of Women Voters has worked to educate the electorate, register voters and make government at all levels more accessible and responsive to citizens.

Mr. Chairman, some have suggested that requiring a voter ID at the polling place will prevent voter fraud. We in the League do not share that view. Voter impersonation at the polling place has not been a problem in Texas or any place else that we can determine since the HAVA act was implemented. Actually determining whether a person matches their photo ID when it is presented can be very subjective and open to discrimination.

Voter ID requirements disproportionately affect the elderly, young people, racial and ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities. These bills offer alternate types of documents along with the voter ID to establish a voter's identity. Can we be sure that these requirements will be uniformly implemented across Texas so that all voters are "qualified" with the same result? Lawfully implementing any of these bills will require significant expenditures of time and money to train election officials and temporary poll workers so that they will understand how to do their jobs in a uniform manner. Laws that are not or cannot be uniformly enforced are unjust.

Voting is our most fundamental expression of citizenship. The expansion of the franchise to include all Americans regardless of race, ethnicity or sex is one of the great successes in the evolution of American democracy. Breaking down barriers to citizen voter participation from literacy tests to the poll tax has been a constant battle for those of us who believe that every citizen should be able to exercise their right to vote.

Let us work together to seek ways to improve voter participation in Texas instead of erecting unnecessary barriers to voting by passing any of these bills into law.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views.