

Testimony for HB 626
Senate State Affairs
May 2007

I am pleased to be here today to express the League of Women Voters of Texas support for full voting participation by all eligible Texans and our opposition to efforts to create new barriers that block citizen voter participation. We hope that the Committee will join us in seeking ways to improve voter participation rather than restrict it.

The League of Women Voters (LWV-TX) is a nonpartisan, political organization with 32 local Leagues across the state.

Since the 2000 presidential election, a great deal of attention has focused on our Nation's systems of election administration. Many Americans are deeply concerned that their votes may not be properly counted and that eligible citizens may be blocked from registering to vote and from voting. From voting machines to voter registration, from voter roll purging practices to provisional balloting, Americans are worried about the conduct of elections. The League also has concerns about our election systems and voter turnout. Texas can't afford a lower voter turnout.

HB 626 requires the office of the Secretary of State to verify citizenship of those registering to vote. This requirement will: increase SOS administrative cost, as outside contractors will be needed to verify the citizenship status of Texas residents born outside the state of Texas; the registration computer database, TEAM, already strained and problematic will be taxed even further; and the SOS will not be readily able to identify those citizens who were adopted, received only a baptism form when born, and married women whose name differs from that of their birth certificate. If the birth certificate status cannot be readily verified, people will need to take an additional step of filling out the required affidavit and have it signed in front of a notary public.

No other state in the Union uses this system for registering voters.

Voting is the most fundamental expression of citizenship. 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.

We support full voting participation by all eligible American citizens and would hope that this Legislature would join us in seeking ways to improve voter participation rather than restrict it.