

Senator Ellis Press Conference March 2007

The League of Women Voters of Texas support full voting participation by all eligible Texans and oppose any legislation that creates new barriers to casting your vote in Texas.

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.

From our perspective, any proposal that restricts voter registration or raises barriers to voting in order to deal with the supposed problem of non-citizen voting is a fear-based approach instead of a fact-based solution. We simply have not seen the facts that would justify restricting the franchise.

Advocates expressed deep concern over new data that suggests Latinos, Asian Americans, and African Americans are less likely to vote as a result of increasingly restrictive voter identification (ID) requirements. These findings are the result of preliminary research presented to the United States election Assistance Commission (EAC) by the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University.

Researchers found that in the 2004 elections, all voters in states requiring voters to present documentation establishing their identity at the polls, were 2.7% less likely to vote than voters in states where no documentation was required. Latinos were 10% less likely to vote, Asian-Americans 8.5% less likely to vote and African Americans 5.7% less likely to vote.

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.