

League of Women Voters of Texas Statement
Press Conference
January 24, 2008

The League of Women Voters of Texas supports full voting participation and opposes efforts that may create barriers blocking citizen voter participation. 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 documentation was not required. Percentage of minority groups less likely to vote is Latinos 10%, Asian-Americans 8.5%, and African Americans 5.7%.

The 2006 Brennan Center Report “Citizens Without Proof: A Survey of Americans’ Possession of Documentary Proof of Citizenship and Photo Identification” found that citizens earning less than \$25,000 per year are more than twice as likely to lack ready documentation of their citizenship as those earning more than \$25,000. Only 48% of voting age women has ready access to their U.S. birth certificate or a certificate with their current legal name.

Many nonprofit groups, including the League of Women Voters of Texas, hold voter registration drives to help people register to vote at the grocery store, the church, and other places where people ordinarily gather. These drives are critical to increasing voter registration. Legislation to require proof of citizenship when registering to vote will deter these efforts as most people do not carry their passport or birth certificate with them to everyday places.

Proposals requiring documented proof of citizenship to deal with a problem of non-citizenship voting is more fear-based than fact-based. We simply have not seen the facts that would justify restricting the franchise. An article regarding *Voter Fraud* by Michael Slater, Deputy Director of Project Vote, in the October 2007 issue of the *Voter*, published by the National League of Women Voters states, “When it comes to claims of voter fraud and the accompanying solutions to this problem, Americans need to adopt some good advice from the marketplace: buyer beware. Purveyors of voter fraud allegations deserve all the suspicion Americans normally reserve for used car salesmen. What is the evidence? Who’s making the claim or proposal? What’s their agenda?”

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 all citizens should be able to exercise their right to vote. We support full voting participation by all eligible Americans, not restrictions.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views.