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League of Women Voters of Wisconsin

Senate Hearing

January 7, 2025

Good Morning and welcome to your newly elected Senate positions. My name is Debra Cronmiller and I am the Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin. I would like to share a statement from the League with you:

The League of Women Voters calls on lawmakers to reject a new bill which would require citizens to show a state-issued photo ID to vote. This unneeded legislation would be harmful to Wisconsin's tradition of clean, fair elections.

Candidates last year promised voters that their first priority in office would be to address the economic crisis. Yet now we see that their first priority is to add to the state's deficit by passing a costly law that does not solve a problem but will keep many eligible Wisconsin residents from exercising their constitutional right to vote.

"The claim that voter ID will save the state from widespread voter fraud is preposterous. Illegal voting is exceedingly rare in Wisconsin, and no one can point to a single case of actual fraud," said Andrea Kaminski, director of the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin.

The Department of Justice substantiated 18 cases of illegal voting out of the almost 3 million votes cast in the November 2004 election. Most of these were felons who did not know they were not allowed to vote. There were a couple of cases of double voting by individuals who owned more than one home and apparently thought they could vote in more than one municipality. These are examples of illegal voting, but the proposed voter ID law would have done nothing to prevent them.

An estimated 11% of the population nationally does not have the type of ID that would be required by this bill. It would place an unfair burden on people who do not need a driver's license or who move frequently. In particular, it would impact the elderly, people with disabilities, and students.

Although the authors of the bill claim that it provides for state-issued ID at no cost to the individual, it does so only if you know enough to specifically ask the DMV to waive the fee. Also, this complex bill says that once the federal Real ID bill is implemented, people will no longer be

able to get a free ID. The bill exempts elderly or disabled individuals who live in certain group settings, but others will have to arrange round-trip transportation to the DMV. Also, many people will have to apply to get copies of their birth certificate or other underlying documentation at a cost.

“A free ID is not free to the taxpayers. There are significant on-going costs for the state and local governments, as well as significant indirect costs for those citizens who apply for the ID,” Kaminski said.

The Legislative Fiscal Bureau estimated that implementation of the 2005 voter ID bill would have cost the DMV \$2.3 million annually, in addition to an indeterminate cost to local governments for training and support of election officials.

An expensive law that does not solve a problem but keeps eligible citizens from voting is a net loss for democracy. It has no place in Wisconsin.

This statement was first submitted in January 2011. It is as true today as then. As we predicted, eligible voters have been disenfranchised by the Voter ID law. Eligible non-driver voters have been disenfranchised. Eligible rural voters who may lack the time and resources to access the sparsely located DMV sites, eligible low-income voters without the means to access a DMV have been disenfranchised, unfortunately, the list goes on.

The League still encourages you to reject this amendment to enshrine an unnecessary voter identification law into our constitution. Wisconsin’s elections are fair, secure and accountable.

Wisconsin’s voters elected you to represent them. Wisconsin’s voters expect you to uphold their voting rights and to defend their right to vote as it is currently defined in the Constitution. There is much to be done in Wisconsin - let’s get to the work of governing.

Thank you.