



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WISCONSIN

122 State Street, #201A
Madison, WI 53703-2500

Phone: (608) 256-0827
Fax: (608) 256-1761

<http://www.lwwwi.org>
lwwwisconsin@lwwwi.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 11, 2008

Contact: Andrea Kaminski, Executive Director
(608) 256-0827

RULE WOULD DISENFRANCHISE VOTERS AND CAUSE ELECTION CHAOS

Eligible Citizens Deserve to Have Their Votes Counted

MADISON - The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin opposes a rule that will disenfranchise people just because at some time in their lives, their data was entered somewhat differently into two different databases.

Attorney General Van Hollen is seeking to overturn a recent decision of the Government Accountability Board and change election procedures – just before a Presidential Election. He wishes to impose an emergency rule dealing with matching the statewide voter registration list with the Department of Transportation database.

Federal law (HAVA) requires that this matching be done. Matching is already being done in Wisconsin. What HAVA does not require is that people with non-matching data be disqualified from casting a regular ballot on Election Day.

The Attorney General's proposal would result in persons with non-matched data to clear up the "nonmatch" or reregister at the polls, or use provisional ballots on Election Day. People would have to bring proof of identity and residence on Election Day, something regular voters are unaccustomed to providing at the polls. Those who vote using a provisional ballot would have to return to the poll on Election Day or to their clerk's office by 4:00 p.m. the next day to validate their eligibility and have their vote counted.

All kinds of simple inconsistencies (e.g., La Follette in one data base and LaFollette in the other) and clerical errors (e.g., Mary K. Jones in one data base and Mayr K. Jones in another) can result in a non-match. Other examples include problems with hyphenated names; names with two words (e.g., MaryKay vs. Mary Kay); first or middle initials (present in one data base only); first names that look like last names and vice versa.

LWVWI Response to Atty General's Lawsuit
September 11, 2008

The GAB reports that more than 20 percent of the new registrations they have cross-checked since August 6 are turning up problems. In a test, four of the six Government Accountability Board (GAB) members did not pass the HAVA check. These are retired judges who likely have been voting regularly since they came of age.

Municipal clerks have asked what we would have them do between now and the election: Should they be recruiting and training poll workers and sending ballots to electors overseas, or should they be working to resolve the data discrepancies of one out of five registered voters?

The proposed rule not only results in confusion as to what already busy clerks and voters should do between now and November 4th, its timing and objective are unwise. Wisconsin's elections have received high marks in comparative studies of election systems, because they are fair, clean, open and transparent. Our election system has been set up to not require a lot of costly provisional ballots. These caused much of the problem in Ohio in 2004, and many, many of these votes were not counted.

Finally, the rule is unfair. As with other last-minute rules changes and restrictive measures, the burden of this rule would fall disproportionately on the people for whom it would be most difficult to get to the clerk's office, that is, the elderly, disabled, and low-income – all of whom are less likely to have the job flexibility, child care or transportation needed to make a second trip to the poll or clerk's office.

The rule Attorney General Van Hollen wants the GAB to implement would cause long lines and confusion at the polls on a day when a record number of citizens will be seeking to exercise their right to vote. It would cause disarray when it comes to counting votes after the election. Worst of all, it would mean that many, many Wisconsin citizens would not be able to cast a vote and have it counted.

###

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin Education Fund is a nonpartisan political organization that promotes informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. LWVWI Education Fund is a proud member of Community Shares of Wisconsin. Call the state League at (608) 256-0827 for more information.