

VOTER I.D. NOT IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

The League of Women Voters opposes legislation requiring voters to present photo identification at the polls. **Senate Bill 4**, introduced by Senator John Ford, Republican from Bartlesville, and **House Bill 1037** by Representative Sue Tibbs, Republican from Tulsa, will make a government-issued photo ID a requirement at the polls.

WE OPPOSE THIS LEGISLATION BECAUSE:

- It effectively disenfranchises thousands of voters in Oklahoma.
- There is no evidence of voter fraud. (The allegation used by legislative leadership against Acorn's registration drives has nothing to do with voter fraud, and voter identification laws wouldn't have addressed the problem!)
- What is the cost and who pays?
 - The voter? It is a poll tax.
 - The state? About \$1 million a year. It is an irresponsible expenditure on an unnecessary program at a time of serious recession and cut backs in school funding, medical services, etc.
- There is already a voter identification process at the polls when the registration has been mailed in or the voter has not voted in some time.
- Voters will be standing in line much longer, especially during heavy turnout elections.
- Precinct officials will be harder to recruit with an onerous requirement to inspect voter identification, match it to the register and process numerous provisional ballots.

Most of us have no problem providing photo identification for numerous transactions. However, according to Mary Wilson, President of the League of Women Voters of the United States, "There are 11 million eligible voters in the country who don't possess a photo ID and most of them can't get one.

- 18% of Americans over 65 (6 million) don't have a photo ID and the percentage goes way up for those over 75 years of age.
- 25% of African Americans don't have a photo ID.
- 10% of 40 million people with disabilities don't have a photo ID.
- 15 % of low income voters don't have a photo ID.

There are lots of valid reasons why these eligible voters can't easily obtain an ID. It requires at least one trip to a location which is usually a good distance from home. Those seniors who no longer drive don't want to bother their friends or family to take them to get an ID; they save that favor in order to get groceries. People who live in the inner-city and those with low incomes very often use public transportation, which may not take them to the places they need to reach in order to obtain an ID. Furthermore, that office may be open only from 9 to 5, hours when they're probably still at work and can't take time off."

Following the November 4, 2008, presidential election, the Secretary of the State Election Board noted that of the 1.4 million votes cast in Oklahoma, only 6 voters arrived at the polls to find a signature beside their name in the registry. When investigated, it turns out that in cases like these, there is no fraud at all. The poll worker did not catch it when the voter simply signed the wrong line.

The League strongly objects to imposing a new barrier to voting. We were established by the women who fought to gain the right to vote in 1920. And for the 88 years since, the League has fought to remove barriers to voting like poll taxes and literacy tests. It has worked to establish convenient registration sites, such as tag agencies and was at the forefront of advocating for the Voting Rights Acts and the Constitutional amendment extending the vote to 18-year-old citizens. If there were voter fraud in Oklahoma elections, the League of Women Voters would be on the front lines supporting protections, but there simply isn't any evidence of fraud.

We agree with the Tulsa World editorial dated November 16, 2008, titled "Voter ID -*An idea whose time hasn't come.*" Other phrases come to mind: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" – "a solution in search of a problem" – "a wolf in sheep's clothing."

We urge Oklahoma state senators and representatives to defeat this discriminatory legislation.

