Requiring Photo ID to Vote: A Solution in Search of a Problem

Voting is a constitutional right, not a privilege.

- The right to vote is protected by more constitutional amendments – the First, Fourteenth, Fifteenth, Nineteenth, and Twenty-Sixth – than any right we enjoy as Americans.

- There are additional federal and state statutes which guarantee and protect voting rights, as well as declarations by the Supreme Court that the right to vote is fundamental because it is protective of all rights.

Voter photo ID laws will make it harder to vote

- Approximately 10% of Americans of voting age do not have a state issued photo ID,¹ and requiring them to purchase one in order to vote is equivalent to a poll tax. No eligible citizen should have to pay to vote.

- Hispanics, Native Americans and African Americans are less likely to have photo identification. Such groups have been the historic targets of voter discrimination in this country. Strict voter identification laws unfairly target their participation in elections.

- Veterans, the elderly, and persons with disabilities will be prohibited from voting. Many older people no longer drive or maintain up-to-date driver’s licenses. If and when such laws pass, many veterans serving our country overseas may not be eligible to vote.

- Voters in rural areas would be particularly affected. Not all cities have Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) offices and getting to a place to obtain an ID could present an undue burden on voters living in rural areas. In some counties it is a 75 mile round trip to the closest MVD office.

Such laws are unnecessary and harmful

- Proponents of photo ID talk about voter fraud. But the only type of voter fraud photo ID could address would be if we had a problem with voters turning up and pretending to be other people at the polls. This is illegal and punishable with jail time and fines. It’s simply not worth the risk, which is why it’s exceptionally rare.

- In this time of budget deficits and fiscal crises, there is no plausible rationale for spending millions of dollars on a photo ID requirement.

- Legislators should confront the serious problems the state and its people face, instead of allocating funds to address a problem that does not exist.