



LWVO Spotlight On... Voter ID and Proof of Citizenship

Today's email is a service from LWVO and features a key issue the League is currently addressing. Sometimes the topic will be plucked from one of the five imPACT reform issues: accountability, redistricting, elections, judicial, and campaign finance. At other times, we will spotlight another concern.

If you're a true policy wonk, you can subscribe to our monthly Legislative Updates consisting of legislation that is currently tracked by our Lobby Corps and moving through the General Assembly. Another choice available to you, especially if you are interested in education, is the Education Update written by our education lobbyist, Joan Platz. For more information on education issues, sign up for Joan's weekly USEP-OHIO Education Update email by sending an email to usepohio@usepohio.com and type "subscribe education update" in the subject line.

CREATING BARRIERS: VOTER IDENTIFICATION AND PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP

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INTRO:

State legislatures continue to introduce legislation that creates additional barriers for our fellow citizens on their way to the voting booth. Over the past several years legislation has been introduced, and in some cases passed, across the nation that would require voter photo identification as a prerequisite to voting. In last year's legislative sessions a new legislative trend emerged - providing proof of citizenship when registering to vote.

PHOTO ID:

The wave of voter photo identification requirements began after the 2004 elections. Today Indiana and Georgia require all voters to present a photo ID at the polls. If a voter does not have a photo ID they can cast a provisional ballot, however they must return with a photo ID in order for their votes to be counted. Florida, Hawaii, Louisiana, South Dakota and Michigan request a photo ID while 17 other states require ID but not necessarily one with a photo.

For those of us with photo identification it can be easy to assume that all of our fellow citizens have some form of photo identification, but in reality, many do not. Eleven percent or as many as 21 million Americans do not have a photo ID. Photo ID requirements have a disproportionate negative impact on specific groups of citizens. For instance; 18% of Americans over 65 (6 million), 25% of African Americans, 10% of 40 million people with disabilities and 15% of low income voters do not have a photo ID.¹

In Ohio the current requirements for Election Day voting according to the Secretary of State are:

- A current and valid photo identification (i.e. Ohio driver's license, state ID, government ID). Photo identification must show name and address (does not need to be current address for driver's license); or
- A military identification that shows the voter's name and current address; or
- A copy of a current utility bill (including cell phone bill), bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document that shows the voter's name and current address (including from a public college or university).

PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP:

In 2007-2008 state legislative sessions we saw proof of citizenship legislation introduced in 19 states. None of those bills became law. This is a trend that we anticipate will continue around the country in future legislative sessions. To date only Arizona requires proof of citizenship when registering to vote. More than 38,000 voter registration applications have been thrown out since Arizona adopted its measure in 2004.

Once again this may appear to be a "reasonable" request, however when we look deeper at the implication of such a requirement it becomes clear that specific groups of our fellow citizens are disproportionately adversely affected by these reforms with the creation of yet another barrier to the polls for those people who are most likely to not vote. A recent study showed that seven percent of the American citizens surveyed do not have ready access to U.S. passports, naturalization papers or birth certificates. This translates to more than 13 million American adult citizens nationwide who cannot easily produce documentation proving their

citizenship. 1

Many of those who possess ready documentation of their citizenship do not have documentation that reflects their current name. For example, survey results show that only 48% of voting-age women with ready access to their U.S. birth certificates have a birth certificate with current legal name - and only 66% of voting-age women with ready access to any proof of citizenship have a document with current legal name. This means that as many as 32 million voting-age women may have available only proof of citizenship documents that do not reflect their current name. 1

LEARN MORE:

The assault on voters will likely continue as long as an electoral advantage results from implementing legislation that creates additional barriers for targeted populations. That is why LWVUS has created the Public Advocacy for Voter Protection Project (PAVP). PAVP has been created to help bolster the League's capacity for continuing and expanding its critical state-based advocacy in order to prevent the disenfranchisement of eligible citizens, particularly underserved populations. We are in phase three of the grant and are now working in the following nine targeted states: GA, FL, IA, MI, MN, MO, OH, PA and WI.

PAVP focuses on approaches to five specific issues threatening the voting rights of citizens nationwide. We work to: (1) oppose ID and documentary proof of citizenship; (2) improve administration of statewide database systems; (3) guard against undue restrictions on voter registration; (4) improve polling place management; (5) improve poll worker training and strengthen poll workers.

To learn more about Voter ID and Proof of Citizenship as well as the PAVP project go to www.lwv.org/PAVP

Source:

1. Brennan Center A SURVEY OF AMERICANS' POSSESSION OF DOCUMENTARY PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP AND PHOTO IDENTIFICATION:

[HTTP://WWW.FEDERALECTIONREFORM.COM/PDF/CITIZENS%20WITHOUT%20PROOF.PDF](http://www.federalectionreform.com/pdf/citizens%20without%20proof.pdf)

