



ACLU of WI Opposes Voter ID Proposal (AB7)

Restrictive Photo ID Requirements for Voting Will Disfranchise Eligible Voters, Not Fix Illegal Votes

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MADISON, WI – Today the Assembly Committee on Election and Campaign Reform will hear AB-7, a bill that would require every eligible voter to show a photo ID each time they cast a ballot in a state election. While proponents of this bill say it will fix vote fraud, the committee will hear from voters and advocates who will testify on why the plan will have a discriminatory impact on minorities and will be a costly and ineffective attempt to prevent alleged fraud.

“When we testified against the Senate version of this bill in January we heard stories from citizens, municipal clerks and voting rights advocates about how currently eligible voters would be disfranchised if this law passed,” said ACLU of Wisconsin Associate Director Renee Shavers. “Nationally the ACLU has worked to fight photo ID requirements on behalf voters who are less likely to have a current state drivers license or state identification.”

Citizens who tend not to have current or state-issued photo identification include a disproportionate number of people of color as well as the elderly, people with disabilities, those who rely on public transportation, and mobile populations such as college students. The ACLU of Wisconsin opposes AB 7 because it would restrict the free and fair voting rights of eligible voters while having a discriminatory effect on minorities. The proposal in Wisconsin would be the most restrictive photo ID requirement for voting in the country.

However even if the bill allows for individuals to obtain identification free of charge, the proof-of-identity documents required often cost money and take time to obtain (see the state [DMV's website on the documents generally needed to acquire an ID](#) card and specifically those required for [proof of identity](#)). Additional barriers can be experienced by citizens who face the circular challenge of obtaining documents for their photo ID when a photo ID is required to obtain those documents.

When individuals, especially low-income workers and those who rely on public transportation face the costs of taking time off of work, traveling to motor vehicle departments with limited locations and hours in Wisconsin and paying fees for certified documents to obtain a photo ID simply for the freedom to vote, the ACLU of Wisconsin pledges to act on behalf of those disenfranchised by the proposed law.

"We hope that Assembly representatives will see that their plan to offer 'free' IDs is not truly free, for individual voters and for the state taxpayers," said Shavers. "If even a minority of eligible voters become disenfranchised by this law, we will oppose it. But all voters, even those who have drivers licenses, should speak out against this attempt to place barriers on the right to vote in free and fair elections in Wisconsin."

Proponents of this measure exaggerate the instances of illegal votes cast in Wisconsin. For instance, according to the [Brennan Center for Justice report](#) on the considerable effort and resources spent to prosecute fraudulent voters in Wisconsin and nationwide after the 2004 elections only 18 cases of substantiated illegal voting led to convictions in our state. Most polling place problems are attributable to data entry or human errors with registration lists. None of the prosecuted cases would be avoided by requiring a photo ID to vote at the polls on Election Day. To the extent that a small number of felons on probation or parole who are ineligible to vote may cast ballots, this measure will not stop them from voting because they have or may get valid photo IDs.

The ACLU of Wisconsin has approximately 7,000 members who support its efforts to defend the civil liberties and civil rights of all Wisconsin residents. For more on the work of the ACLU of Wisconsin, visit our [webpage](#). You can also get news and opinion on civil liberties in Wisconsin on our [Cap City Liberty blog](#). Find us on [Facebook and Twitter at ACLUMadison and ACLUofWisconsin](#).

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