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MEDIA RELEASE

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Federal Ruling Blocking Restrictive Voter ID Law Will Impact Milwaukee Hearing

MILWAUKEE—Today, the American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin applauded a federal court ruling blocking a newly enacted Georgia voter photo identification law. The ACLU of Wisconsin believes that the court's findings in a 123 page ruling are applicable to proposals already vetoed by Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle.

Yesterday's ruling by U.S. District Court Judge Harold Murphy in Georgia blocked a controversial new law that dramatically restricts the types of photo identification that may be used in voting in that state. The State of Georgia may not enforce its voter ID law while the court case, brought by the American Civil Liberties Union and a coalition of voting rights advocates, continues.

The ruling comes just before a hearing of the House Administration Committee on voting rights scheduled for Monday in Milwaukee. It refutes the arguments of those who would disenfranchise the poor and elderly with onerous and unnecessary photo ID requirements.

"Some Wisconsin legislators have pushed for legislation limiting voting rights that is even more restrictive than the unconstitutional law that the court blocked in Georgia. The Georgia law allows more types of photo IDs than do the Wisconsin proposals," said Chris Ahmuty, the ACLU of Wisconsin's executive director.

"A Wisconsin court, like the federal court in Georgia, would have to find that a photo ID requirement is likely to impose an unconstitutional burden on the right to vote, violates the Voting Rights Act, and constitutes a poll tax," Ahmuty continued.

"In Wisconsin there is no doubt that evidence similar to that in Georgia demonstrates that photo ID requirements prevent the elderly, disabled and people of color from voting. We know, for instance, in Wisconsin at least 170,000 Wisconsin seniors do not have the ID they would need to vote under some proposals," Ahmuty continued.

"Voting is a right in Wisconsin just as much as it is in Georgia. It's inconceivable to many Wisconsinites that we are less responsible or could be less free than Georgians," Ahmuty concluded.

A link to Judge Murphy's order is available at www.acluga.org.

The ACLU of Wisconsin has over 8,500 members. It is a citizen group dedicated to protecting the civil rights and civil liberties of all Wisconsin residents. --30--