



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS

TESTIMONY LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS HOUSE ELECTIONS

MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2017

I am Cinde Weatherby, testifying as a member and on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Texas in OPPOSITION to HB 3474. We appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. Thank you for allowing us to share our position on this bill.

As the world's leading democracy, our voting system should be free, fair and accessible to all eligible Texans. We believe it is wrong to block any eligible Texan from voting by creating voter registration system requirements for which some cannot comply.

HB 3474 puts forth requirements that have already been shown to disenfranchise tens of thousands of applicants in the few other states that attempted to implement them. A review of the facts indicates how that happens.

- As many as 5.7% of U.S. citizens (11 million) do not have a passport or birth certificate available. As with most issues, the numbers are proportionately higher for minority, less affluent, older and rural citizens. A chart on page 3 of the attached information shows rural residents as the highest at 9.1%.
- Why don't they have these documents? The cost is prohibitive, as well as the time and effort required. Furthermore, the process can be a dead end. For example, to acquire a birth certificate online requires a state driver license or state ID card – the very thing the certificate they seek is to help them acquire.
- Many citizens register to vote in registration drives or with help of a Volunteer Deputy Registrar. This bill would make that almost impossible. Citizens do not typically carry citizenship documents with them, and VDRs don't have photocopiers with them. Before the Arizona system was ended, voters registered in registration drives declined 44% following adoption. In Kansas, LWV registration activities were limited, hindered, or stopped entirely.
- In addition to HB 3474's likely violation of the nondiscrimination provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the National Voter Registration Act requires states to accept and use the federal voter registration form. The Supreme Court has ruled on this matter already in the Arizona case.

In light of the several rulings finding the Texas Voter ID requirements discriminatory, passage of this bill will certainly be immediately litigated. Texas citizens grow weary of its state revenues being spent on needless litigation. To date, the state already spent more than \$3.5 million on the Voter ID lawsuit alone – enough to pay for ERIC, the more rigorous state crosscheck voter registration system more than three times over.

In summary, we request that you reject this bill and concentrate the State's efforts on the essential protection of the integrity of our elections, including keeping ineligible people from voting. We ask that you protect the voting rights of those eligible Texans who would be wrongly restricted by this proposal.

**For additional information, please contact: Cinde Weatherby, Voting & Elections Issue Chair,
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The League of Women Voters of Texas (LWV-TX) is a nonpartisan citizens' organization that has fought since 1919 to improve our government and engage all citizens in the decisions that impact their lives. It represents more than 5,000 members and supporters in the 25 Local Leagues throughout Texas.

The League of Women Voters never supports or opposes candidates for office or political parties. The member-driven organization of women and men encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and seeks to influence public policy through education and advocacy of positions based on extensive issue study and consensus.