

TESTIMONY  
State Affairs Committee  
HB 218  
April 30, 2007

I am pleased to be here today to express the League of Women Voters of Texas support for full voting participation by all eligible Texans and our opposition to efforts to create new barriers that block citizen voter participation. We hope that the Committee will join us in seeking ways to improve voter participation rather than restrict it.

Since the 2000 presidential election, a great deal of attention has focused on our Nation's systems of election administration. Many Americans are deeply concerned that their votes may not be properly counted and that eligible citizens may be blocked from registering to vote and from voting. From voting machines to voter registration, from voter roll purging practices to provisional balloting, Americans are worried about the conduct of elections. The League also has concerns about our election systems.

From our perspective, any proposal that restricts voter registration or raises barriers to voting in order to deal with the supposed problem of non-citizen voting is a fear-based approach instead of a fact-based solution. We simply have not seen the facts that would justify restricting the franchise.

Advocates expressed deep concern over new data that suggests Latinos, Asian Americans, and African Americans are less likely to vote as a result of increasingly restrictive voter identification (ID) requirements. These findings are the result of preliminary research presented to the United States election Assistance Commission (EAC) by the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University.

Researchers found that in the 2004 elections all voters in states requiring voters to present documentation establishing their identity at the polls were 2.7% less likely to vote than voters in states where no documentation was required. Latinos were 10% less likely to vote, Asian-Americans 8.5% less likely to vote and African Americans 5.7% less likely to vote.

The League strongly opposes HB 218 which creates new barriers by requiring voters to present proof of identification at the polling place.

Voting is the most fundamental expression of citizenship. Breaking down barriers to citizen voter participation from literacy tests to the poll tax has been a constant battle for those of us who believe that all citizens should be able to exercise their right to vote. We support full voting participation by all eligible Americans, not restrictions.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views.