

**Testimony
Elections Committee
January 25, 2008**

The League of Women Voters of Texas supports full voting participation by all eligible citizens and opposes voter identification (ID) requirements that may create a barrier to voting. Advocates express deep concern over the data that suggest Latinos, Asians, and African Americans, eligible to vote are less likely to vote as a result of restrictive voter ID requirements. These findings are supported by 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 that states requiring voters to present documentation establishing identity at the polls were 2.7% less likely to vote than voters in states where documentation was not required. Percentages of minority groups less likely to vote are Latinos 10%, Asian-Americans 8.5%, and African Americans 5.5%.

The 2006 Brennan Center “Citizens Without Proof,” from “A Survey of Americans Possession of Documentary Proof of Citizenship and Photo Identification”, found that citizens earning less than \$25,000 per year are more than twice as likely to lack ready identification of their citizenship as those earning more than \$25,000. Only 48% of voting age women have ready access to their U.S birth certificate and a certificate with their current legal name.

Many nonprofit groups, including the League of Women Voters of Texas, hold voter registration drives to help people register to vote at the grocery store, the church and other places where people ordinarily gather. These drives have been critical to increase voter registration and voter participation. Legislation requiring proof of citizenship when registering to vote will deter these efforts, as most people do not carry a passport or birth certificate with them to everyday places.

Proposals requiring documented proof of citizenship to deal with a problem on non-citizen voting is more fear-based than fact-based. We simply have not seen the facts that would justify restricting the franchise. An article regarding “Voter Fraud” by Michael Slater, Deputy Director of Project Vote, in the October 2007 issue of the Voter published by the League of Women Voters, states: “When it comes to claims of voter fraud and the accompanying solutions to this “problem,” Americans need to adopt some good advice from the market place: buyer beware. Purveyors of voter fraud allegations deserve all the suspicion Americans normally reserve for used car salesman. Tough questions are in order: What’s the evidence? Who’s making the claims or proposal? What’s their agenda?”

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

Thank you for the opportunity from the League of Women Voters of Texas to share our views.