

Protect our right to vote. Oppose House Bill 1318.

We strongly oppose House Bill 1318 because it would require every citizen to present ID when they go to vote.

NO NEED FOR ID REQUIREMENT

There is no proven need for the voter ID.

Supporters say voter ID's are needed to prevent widespread voter fraud. Yet proponents have failed to show any reliable proof that the integrity of any Pennsylvania election has been compromised by someone impersonating a registered voter. The National Commission on Election Reform found that there is NO evidence that the fraud which voter ID REQUIREMENTS SEEK to address is even prevalent in the U.S.

We believe that the ID requirement would selectively disenfranchise certain segments of the population – those who do not have identification because they do not drive, go to school, or engage in activities under which they would be issued an ID. Although HB1318 provides free IDs for voting purposes, this provision creates two classes of voters, those who have the required ID as a matter of course and those who need to apply for an ID in order to vote. Obtaining an ID would create a hardship for many, especially the elderly and the poor.

Furthermore, this bill would negatively impact those who forgot to bring their identification to the polls. While they could vote by provisional ballot, they would later need to go to the county board of elections with their ID in order to have their ballot cast. Again, those most affected would be people who do not have ready access to transportation or would have to take time off from work or caregiving duties to travel to the election board. This provision could disenfranchise 6-10% of the electorate since this is the number nationwide of people who don't have photo identification.

Voter IDs will create problems at the polls.

Requiring every voter to show an ID imposes additional burdens on poll workers who will have to learn what kinds of identification are acceptable and be forced to explain to some voters why the produced identification is not acceptable. This will slow down voting and create long lines. The potential for selective enforcement and voter intimidation would also be increased.

Voter ID requirements will necessitate increased use of the provisional ballot creating an additional cost and administrative burden on county election officials who will need to verify the ID's of those who are later able to bring them into the board of elections and will also have to count the additional ballots. Additionally, counties will have no idea how many provisional ballots to print. Allegheny county reported some shortages in 2004 (and possibly elsewhere as well). This will exacerbate the danger of running out, or will lead to added costs of printing a large number of ballots.

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We will strongly oppose House Bill 1318 if it is amended to remove the right to vote from felons released from prison who are still on probation or parole.

STOP FURTHER DISENFRANCHISEMENT OF PEOPLE CONVICTED OF FELONIES

Felons voting rights should be restored when they are released from prison.

Current Pennsylvania law allows individuals who have been convicted of felonies to vote while they are on probation or parole. Disenfranchisement would affect thousands of Pennsylvanians and selectively impact African-American men. Former felons should be encouraged to participate in all aspects of civic life as part of a good program of rehabilitation.

Felon disenfranchisement would be a step backward for Pennsylvania. Around the country other states are taking steps to phase out archaic and discriminatory laws and practices that disenfranchise felons. In fact, in some states (e.g. Maine and Vermont), voting is considered such a basic American right that a person can not lose the right to vote even while in prison. After all many prisoners continue to be concerned about elected officials and public policies that affect their children, parents, education, healthcare, housing, taxes, economy and many other issues that will have an impact on their families. In 2000 the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania struck down a law that put a five-year ban on voter registration for anyone who had been convicted of a felony and spent time in prison.

Criminologists agree that the most successfully rehabilitated former prisoners are those who rekindle their sense of civic responsibility and become active, productive members of their community. Felons who have been released from prison have jobs and pay taxes.

Vote NO on House Bill 1318!

For more information, contact:

Jennine Miller, Project H.O.M.E.

jenninemiller@projecthome.org or (215) 232-7272 x 3042

or

Celeste Taylor, PA Voter Coalition (Western Pennsylvania Representative),

taylorceleste@hotmail.com or 412-628-7867

The Protect Our Vote and Stop House Bill 1318 campaign is co-sponsored by AARP Pennsylvania, ACLU Pennsylvania, ACORN Pennsylvania, ActiVote America, Advancement Project, Bike for Democracy, B-PEP (Black Political Empowerment Project), Center for Civic Participation, Committee of Seventy, Common Cause of Pennsylvania, Everybody VOTE, Ex-Offenders Association of PA, Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania, Just Harvest, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, League of Young Voters, League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania, Mental Health Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Alliance for Retired Americans, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, PA Voters Coalition, People For the American Way, PA Voter Coalition, Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia, Project H.O.M.E., Project VOTE, Resources for Human Development, Roots of Promise/a project of The Thomas Merton Center, Service Employees International Union Pennsylvania State Council, Southwestern PA Alliance of HUD Tenants, UNITE HERE, Vote for Homes!, VotePA, X-Offenders for Community Empowerment, WomenVote PA/Women's Law Project, and other organizations. (Contact jenninemiller@projecthome.org or 215-232-7272 to add your organization and get involved with the campaign to protect our vote and stop HB 1318.)

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