



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 1216 Election Law - Voting - Proof of Identity

POSITION: Oppose

By: Nancy Soreng, President

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The League of Women Voters was founded on the concept that voter participation is an essential element of a thriving democracy. Our organization has worked for over 100 years to ensure the right to vote for every citizen. We oppose efforts to create new barriers that block citizen participation and therefore oppose a requirement to present identification to vote.

Pursuant to the federal Help America Vote Act, Maryland requires a voter to provide a verifiable driver's license number or the last four digits of a Social Security number at the time of voter registration. In the case of a voter unable to provide this information, other identification and residency proof is required, and a unique identifying number is assigned to the voter. Additionally, a voter who submits a voter registration by mail is required, at the first instance in which he or she votes, to present identification.

Expansion of voter identification requirements beyond what the Help America Vote Act mandates will suppress voter turnout and be burdensome to voters and election officials. Additionally, photo identification requirements disproportionately impact those least likely to have current government-issued photo identification: the elderly, young people, rural voters, minority citizens, and the poor.

In [Resources on Voter Fraud Claims](#), the Brennan Center compiled more than 30 studies and analyses of voter fraud. It concluded, *"The consensus from credible research and investigation is that the rate of illegal voting is extremely rare, and the incidence of certain types of fraud – such as impersonating another voter – is virtually nonexistent."*

The Brennan Center's seminal report on this issue, [The Truth About Voter Fraud](#), found *that most reported incidents of voter fraud are actually traceable to other sources, such as clerical errors or bad data matching practices. The report reviewed elections that had been meticulously studied for voter fraud and found incident rates between 0.0003 percent and 0.0025 percent. Given this tiny incident rate for voter impersonation fraud, it is more likely, the report noted, that an American "will be struck by lightning than that he will impersonate another voter at the polls.*

We urge you to issue an unfavorable report on HB 1216.