



I am Rita Blouke here today on behalf of the LWV of Montana to share our thoughts on SB 234. The League is a nonpartisan organization whose membership is open to both men and women.

The League is not supporting or opposing SB 234 at this time, but would like to comment for the record.

Montana is currently exceeding federal HAVA requirements by requiring all voters to show ID at the polls. The League would typically oppose a system in which state requirements for casting a ballot would exceed federal requirements. But as a matter of practical application the League supports electoral systems that are shown to protect both the security and accessibility of elections.

The League has gathered no evidence at this point that the November election was not secure and was not accessible, even after talking with groups who serve citizens often disenfranchised. One way to assess the extent to which ID issues prevented voters from having their votes counted in the last election is to look at the number of provisional votes cast that were not counted due to unresolved ID problems. The LWV has only recently had a chance to look at final statistics from Montana's general election, which we've compared to election results from one other state.

Nebraska has implemented ID requirements as minimally mandated by HAVA, and as SB 234 would have Montana do, requiring ID at the polls only from first time voters who have not already proven they are who they say they are in a particular jurisdiction. Nebraska's Assistant Secretary of State Amy Bracht reports that 792,603 votes were cast in Nebraska's general election. A little over 17,000 provisional ballots were cast. In the end, about 559 ballots or .07% of total votes cast were not counted in Nebraska due to not providing proper ID, or because their voter registration card or provisional voter paperwork was not completed. The Montana Secretary of State website shows that Montana citizens cast 456,096 ballots in November. In looking at the most recent report, we've been able to glean that of the estimated 671 provisional ballots cast, between 48-61 provisional ballots were cast due to an ID problem. In the end, approximately 50 ballots or .01% of total votes cast were not counted in Montana due to ID issues that were not resolved by the deadline.

More time and effort clearly need to be devoted to studying and comparing the impact of the policies and procedures implementing by states across the nation. Our comparison between two states that have adopted different laws regarding ID at the polls would indicate that Montana's system resulted in fewer voters losing their vote due to unresolved identification problems.

We know that SB 234 is intended to maximize the chances that Montana voters will be able to successfully cast a ballot, but as proposed, it would also decrease access for some citizens by requiring an address on ID.

In conclusion, until there is a clear problem with the current law requiring all voters to show ID at the polls, the League would urge caution in legislating changes to a Voter ID system that the people seem to understand and be able to comply with.

Thank you for consideration of our concerns.