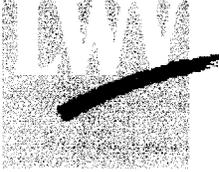


152
HB180 - OPPOSE

Exhibit No. 9
Date 3-21-2011
Bill No. HB 152



The League of Women Voters

A Voice For Citizens, A Force For Change

Testimony- HB152

Senate Committee on State Administration-March 21, 2011

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee

My name is Gladys Hardin, here today representing the League of Women Voters of Montana in opposition to HB 152. Back before the Civil Rights Act was passed some Southern States levied a 'poll tax', requiring payment before a citizen could vote. They were widely found invalid.

HB152 would put a similar barrier into Montana law. House Bill 152 requires citizens to have a Montana driver's license, a Montana State ID card or a tribal photo ID in order to register or to vote. A Montana State ID, issued by the drivers license bureau costs \$8.00 for 4 years. In Indiana, the first state to implement legislation requiring photo ID in 2007, the State at least provided for a free State ID. HB152 requires Montana citizens to pay for the ID they would be required to have in order to vote.

Proponents say this legislation is needed to combat fraud, but Montana's chief election officer, our Secretary of State, and local elections officials of both parties say there is no credible evidence of widespread or organized fraud in Montana elections. Photo ID legislation is instead, a prime example of a deliberate attempt to keep some qualified citizens from voting. Requiring voters to pay for the privilege of voting is unacceptable.

Photo ID requirements are one of the most serious threats to efforts to ensure the right of every eligible American to vote. Nationwide about 12% of eligible voters do not own a photo id, so this requirement would potentially disenfranchise thousands of Montana's registered voters. The burden will be greatest for citizens for whom it is cost prohibitive or difficult to take off work, get transportation, stand in line, and apply for the required State ID.

Additionally it could be time-consuming and costly, or even impossible to obtain the underlying documentation that is needed to even apply for the ID.

The League of Women Voters believes that voting is a fundamental right of citizens. Denying citizens their right to vote does nothing to promote employment or to strengthen our state economy, the goals stated by many legislators in their campaigns for office last fall.

State government should be in the business of making it easier for citizens to vote--not adding costly restrictions and hassles that will negatively impact Montana voters. The League of Women Voters of Montana calls on the Montana State Senate to reject this and similar legislation that costs taxpayers' money and denies them fundamental Constitutional rights."

Please Vote No on HB152.