

IN OPPOSITION TO H.569, H.578, H.581, H.663, H.668, H.670, S.335 and S.360
Relating to Voter Identification Requirements
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts strongly urges you to oppose the above-noted bills related to expanding voter identification requirements at the election polls. These bills will make it more difficult to vote and have a chilling effect on voter participation.

The right to vote is the foundation of our democracy, and voting should be as easy and accessible as possible. Expansion of voter identification requirements beyond what is mandated by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) will suppress voter turnout, be burdensome to voters and election officials, and create barriers - especially for voters who are disabled, are members of a racial or ethnic minority, are new citizens, or are young voters. In addition, it has been frequently demonstrated that voter disenfranchisement is a greater problem than voting fraud.

The above-noted bills expand the requirements for showing identification to vote. These bills will require the voter to present various types of identification at each election. Amongst those noted were some form of photo ID, for example, a Massachusetts driver's license, a Massachusetts voter identification card, a United States passport, or an employer photo ID. Some offer various other non-photo documents. Many of the bills state that "Any Person desiring to vote who fails to present suitable identification shall not be permitted to vote." Some offer the possibility of a provisional ballot with a requirement to present a photo to the city or town clerk before that ballot will be accepted.

Photo ID requirements disproportionately impact those who are least likely to possess a current photo ID: the elderly, young people, people of color, rural voters, individuals with disabilities and frequent movers. Many Americans live in domiciles as roommates, spouses, or relative, or live on a college campus, where their name is not on the lease of on a utility bill. This means they do not have these items as forms of identification at the polls. At the polls, acceptance of an ID, particularly when IDs are not limited to a driver's license, passport, etc., would be dependent upon individual poll workers and election officials. Such tests and devices have historically resulted in discrimination and disenfranchisement of eligible voters.

In February 2007 the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University completed a study that examined the 2004 election and concluded that, in states requiring voters to present an ID at the polls, voters were 2.7 percent less likely to vote than in states where voters were merely required to state their names. This research is supported by a poll conducted by the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Laws in November 2006 that found as many as 11% of Americans – more than 21 million individuals, did not have a current government ID. These individual included 6 million elderly, 15% of voting-age citizens who earn less than \$25,000 a year, and 25% of voting age African Americans.

H.565 and H.587 are two similar bills , however, the League has not had an opportunity to subject them to our process for determining support or opposition. Once this has been completed, they will no doubt be added to the above list.

Under HAVA, states must, among other things, require all voters to provide their driver's license number or the last four digits of their social security number when registering to vote. HAVA also requires first-time voters who registered by mail to produce evidence of their identity before voting. The League believes these requirements for identification are adequate to prevent fraud.