

Get the Facts: Debunking Myths about Voter photo-ID

Myth: Voter photo-ID laws are necessary to prevent illegal voting.

FACT: The only type of illegal voting that a voter photo-ID can prevent is voter impersonation. There is no evidence of voter impersonation in any Minnesota election.

Myth: Minnesota's election system does not have safeguards.

FACT: Minnesota is recognized nationally for the integrity of its election system. In two statewide recounts in 2008 and 2010, our election system was put under a microscope as lawyers from the two major parties looked for problems. They didn't find any; they did find that Minnesota's election system is remarkably sound and transparent. Visit www.lwvmn.org to learn more about the safeguards.

Myth: Showing a photo ID to vote isn't a big deal because everyone has a photo ID. I show one to get on a plane or buy alcohol.

FACT: Proposed legislation in 2011 allowed only 3 kinds of photo IDs for voting: a Minnesota driver's license, a Minnesota-issued photo ID card, or a newly created form of voter photo-ID. The ID would have to show the voter's current home address. Voters could not use a passport, military ID or student ID.

Approximately 11% of the voting population does not carry a photo ID that meets these rigid requirements. The percentage is higher among certain groups: the elderly (18%), younger adults (18%), minorities (25% of African-Americans) and people who are low-income (15%).

Myth: No Minnesota voter would be unable to vote on Election Day. Free voter photo-IDs will be made available to those who do not already have one.

FACT: There is no such thing as a free photo ID. The cost for the IDs themselves would be paid by Minnesota taxpayers.

People applying for a "free" voter photo-ID would have to travel to a Department of Vehicle Services office – in some cases 50-100 miles roundtrip -- and would be required to show secondary documents, which may cost \$35. For example, a married woman who changed her name after she got married would have to provide both her birth certificate and her marriage license to get a "free" ID. A birth certificate costs \$26 in Minnesota and a marriage license costs \$9. She also may face delays in getting those documents, especially if they are coming from out of state.

Myth: Frail seniors or seniors who have difficulty with transportation can vote absentee.

FACT: Proposed legislation in 2011 required **all absentee voters** to provide a Minnesota driver's license number, Minnesota State ID number or voter photo-ID number on their



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absentee ballot application. Any absentee ballot application that lacks one of these valid numbers would be denied a ballot. Moreover, if a photo identification requirement became part of the Minnesota Constitution, the legislature could not exempt certain categories of voters from the requirement.

Myth: *Voters who do not have the proper ID on Election Day or forget their ID at home will not be disenfranchised. These voters will be allowed to vote a provisional ballot at the polls.*

FACT: Provisional balloting requires the voter to return to the county auditor's office within a few days to present the necessary voter photo-ID documentation. Otherwise, the vote doesn't count. In many cases, a citizen who has the right to vote but does not have the proper voter photo-ID will not be able to get one within a few days. In addition, even voters who forgot their IDs at home would have to return during a weekday to a county auditor's or municipal clerk's office, requiring time off from work and transportation to and from the offices.

Myth: *Non-citizens can vote in our elections and they would never be detected.*

FACT: Our state election system provides safeguards that prevent this: When a voter registers to vote they must provide either a driver's license number or state ID number or the last four digits of their Social Security Number. This information is then matched against citizenship data from the Department of Public Safety. A voter whose data doesn't match is flagged as challenged and would be required to answer a series of questions under oath at the polls on Election Day before being allowed to vote. Any violation of election law is a felony and all violations are turned over to the County Attorney's office for investigation and prosecution as needed.

In addition, undocumented immigrants generally avoid situations in which they might draw the attention of government officials.

Myth: *Polls show that Minnesotans want voter photo-ID.*

FACT: Most people do not know the full story of voter photo-ID. Polls do not explain that (1) only limited forms of photo ID would be acceptable and would have to show the voter's current home address--eliminating some common forms of ID, such as student IDs; (2) a voter photo-ID requirement would create barriers for at least 144,000 Minnesota voting-age citizens; and (3) voter photo-ID would eliminate absentee voting for homebound voters. In addition, voter photo-ID would cripple Minnesota's Election Day registration system, one of the reasons that Minnesota leads the nation in voter participation.

Myth: *Voting is a privilege.*

FACT: **Voting is every citizen's right, guaranteed and protected by the United States and Minnesota Constitutions.**



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