



Open Letter to the League of Women Voters of Texas

May 6, 2009

Dear League of Women Voters of Texas,

Yesterday, we read with interest your organization's support of "policies that improve voter participation and address valid election problems." However, it seems that most of the "non-partisan" principles you articulated either correspond directly to legislation currently being advanced by Democrat legislators or were presented at the staff briefing for members of the Democrat Caucus at the beginning of the 81st Legislature.

Nonetheless, the best way to improve voter participation in the electoral process is to increase voters' confidence in the process. Former President Jimmy Carter and former Secretary of State James Baker, Co-chairs of the Carter-Baker Commission on Federal Election Reform, announced this principal in 2005 when they reported that "Americans are losing confidence in the fairness of elections, and while we do not face a crisis today, we need to address the problems of our electoral system."

In an effort to address the crisis of confidence that plagues our electoral system, we urge you to join with us in supporting the implementation of strong photo identification requirements to participate in elections in Texas. This simple yet effective change has coincided with increased voter turnout in Indiana and Georgia, especially among minority populations.

There are several important reasons to implement a strong Photo ID requirement:

➤ **The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that a photo ID requirement is Constitutional.**

The Supreme Court ruled "the universally applicable requirements of Indiana's voter-identification law are eminently reasonable." While an ID requirement may place a burden on voters, the Court concluded that "burdens... arising from life's vagaries, however, are neither so serious nor so frequent as to raise any question about the constitutionality of [photo ID requirements]."

➤ **This legislation is workable because of widespread use of government-issued IDs.**

The Office of the Secretary of State reports that there are 12.7 million registered voters in Texas as of the March 2008 primary elections. According to the Department of Public Safety, there are more than 14 million valid Texas driver's licenses and almost

another 4 million valid Texas ID cards issued to Texans over age 18. Currently, there are 5.3 million more government-issued identification cards possessed by the voting age population than there are registered voters. Also, for those voters who lack a government-issued photo ID and cannot afford one, we support providing an ID free of charge.

➤ **There is widespread public support for Voter ID.**

In a July 2008 poll conducted by the University of Texas, 70 percent of Texans supported a photo ID requirement, with 52 percent strongly supporting the proposal. Of African Americans polled, 68 percent supported photo ID, along with 65 percent of Hispanics/Latinos. Polls by Rasmussen (77 percent support; 2006) and the Texas Conservative Coalition (81 percent support; December 2008) confirm these findings.

We look forward to continuing to work with you and other stakeholders on proposals to increase voter participation, including a strong and workable photo ID requirement.

Respectfully,



State Representative Wayne Christian
House District 9 – Center
President, Texas Conservative Coalition