



## Legislation Summary:

**An Act establishing voter identification procedures, An Act requiring photo identification to vote, An Act ensuring election integrity through voter identification, An Act requiring photo identification for voting, An Act relative to valid identification at voting polls**

Initial bill numbers: [S374](#), [S397](#), [H363](#), [H372](#), [H386](#) (Bill numbers will change as legislation proceeds.)

Sponsors: Sen. Viriato M. deMacedo, Sen. Richard J. Ross, Rep. Colleen Garry, Rep. Bradley Jones, Rep. Elizabeth A. Poirier

These bills, all requiring some form of photo identification at the polls, would make it more difficult to vote. Expansion of voter identification requirements beyond what is mandated by the Help America Vote Act can suppress voter turnout, be burdensome to voters and election officials, and create barriers – especially for voters who are elderly or disabled, members of a racial or ethnic minority, new citizens, and young voters. Under the Help America Vote Act (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 identification before voting. The League believes these requirements are adequate to prevent voter impersonation.

LWVMA opposes these bills because:

- Voter disenfranchisement and low voter turnout are much greater problems than in-person voter impersonation, the only form of fraud showing a photo ID would address.
- Requiring identification at the polling place would result in many eligible voters being turned away. Many poor and minority voters do not carry photo identification, and would be turned away in error. These voters, especially new citizens who may be concerned about government intrusion, are also more likely to be intimidated by such requirements.
- Implementing photo ID to vote is an unnecessary expense. One study found that implementing the voter photo ID law in Indiana exceeds \$10 million over four years. The costs for a proposed photo ID law in Missouri were put at \$6 million the first year and \$4 million each year for the second and third years.
- In November 2001, a federal court outlawed an identification requirement at the polls in Lawrence, MA. Both the U.S. Department of Justice and private plaintiffs argued, and the court found, that “the burden imposed by this requirement will fall disproportionately on the Latin American community...”

- In comprehensive studies of voter fraud, researchers concluded that in-person election fraud has been extremely rare. Most reported instances of in-person voter impersonation fraud were found to be baseless.
- Many Americans live with roommates, spouses, or relatives, or live on a college campus, where their name is not on the lease or on utility bills so they do not have these items as forms of identification at the polls.

**League position:** “The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that voting is a fundamental citizen’s right that must be guaranteed. (LWVUS) (1982) The 1986 LWVUS Convention affirmed an essential element for protecting the right to vote was encouraging participation in the political process. The 1990 convention affirmed that the LWVUS should continue emphasis on protecting the right to vote by working to increase voter participation. LWVMA reaffirmed that.”

“LWVMA has supported legislation to remove administrative obstacles to voting and/or registration.”  
*Where We Stand, p. 13*