



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF GEORGIA

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Legislature Approves New Voter ID Law

League of Women Voters Raises Serious Issues

ATLANTA – Jan. 26, 2006 – The amended version of Senate Bill 84, the revised voter identification bill, passed the Georgia House of Representatives Wednesday and was signed by the governor today. Although the new law offers voter identification cards to voters at no cost, the League of Women Voters of Georgia maintains that the measure does nothing to address voter fraud in the state of Georgia while creating unfair burdens on the state and its taxpayers to implement.

“This measure will not only disenfranchise thousands of properly registered Georgia voters, but also redirect critical state dollars from dealing with Georgia’s real election issues to address a problem that simply does not exist,” Jennifer Owens, executive director of the League, said. “While the League remains dedicated to addressing voter fraud and ensuring our elections are secure and accessible to all voters, this law, like its predecessor, does just the opposite and effectively makes our state the most difficult in the nation in which to vote.”

Moreover, the implementation of the law raises several serious issues, including the following:

- The bill was passed without a fiscal note estimating the cost to taxpayers for the implementation and ongoing maintenance of the photo ID cards, which will feature embedded security measures to prevent replication. According to law, a fiscal note must be attached to any piece of legislation that is expected to have a “significant” fiscal impact. While neither the House nor the Senate deemed the cost of implementation “significant,” early estimates from the Secretary of State’s office are approximately \$6,000 per county for the equipment alone – nearly \$1 million for all 159 counties.
- Will this be in place in time for the 2006 elections? There is a special election in March, a significant primary election in July and a monumental general election in November. How long will the state RFP and contract selection process for the equipment and support take? Will there be enough time to train staff in each county?
- There is no voter education funding. The current bill allows for education “subject to funds” and is likely to amount to an unfunded mandate.
- Does the revised version address the concerns of the federal district court that imposed an injunction against House Bill 244? Several constitutional questions, including the unnecessary burden on the right to vote and the creation of two classes of voters subject to different standards, remain unanswered.

The new measure will require approval from the Department of Justice before officially becoming law. Because of Georgia's history of voting discrimination, the 1965 Voting Rights Act requires that any changes to election laws or voting procedures receive pre-clearance from federal officials before going into effect.

About the League of Women Voters of Georgia

Founded in 1920, The League of Women Voters of Georgia is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy. For more information, contact the League by e-mailing lwvga@lwvga.org or calling (678) 547-0755.

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