Texas Voters ID Update

Dear Fellow Democrat,

As many of you know, during the last legislative session the Texas Legislature passed a bill (SB 14) that would require voters to show a photo ID when they vote. However, Texas is one of the states subject to Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, which means that before any changes to voting procedures can be implemented, they must be approved either by the Department of Justice (DOJ) or by a federal court in a process known as “preclearance”. You can read more about the preclearance process as well as the rest of the back story on the Texas Voter ID saga at the links at the bottom of this post.

First of all, the DOJ has not issued an opinion one way or the other on the voter ID bill. They have until mid-March to do so. While no one knows for certain, most people who follow these sorts of things believe the DOJ will deny preclearance to the Texas law just as they did to the South Carolina voter ID law.

Instead of waiting for the DOJ to issue an opinion, the State of Texas has filed an Expedited Complaint for Declaratory Judgment in U.S. District court asking for the court to grant preclearance to the voter ID bill. You can read that filing here.

We do not know what the court’s decision will be, how long it will take to make a decision, or if there will be further legal action in a higher court once the District Court acts.

**Bottom line, we still don’t know if voter i.d. will be in place for any of the elections held in Texas this year.** However, in an effort to be prepared just in case photo identification becomes a requirement for voting at some point, here are the things you need to know and/or do. Even if you already have the required photo ID please share this information with others so that those voters who may not have photo ID can be informed and prepared.

**The types of ID that will be necessary IF the voter ID bill is approved are:**

- Driver’s license, election identification certificate, personal identification card, or concealed handgun license issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety;
- United States Military identification card containing the person’s photograph;
- United States citizenship certificate containing the person’s photograph; or
- United States passport.

With the exception of the U.S. citizenship certificate, the identification must be current or have expired no more than 60 days before being presented for voter qualification at the polling place.
There are some exemptions for voters who are disabled or have religious objections to being photographed, however, the local elections offices will not be able to put the procedures in place to keep track of who qualifies unless and until the voter ID bill is precleared.

Voters who do not possess any of the above types of ID will be able to obtain a free Election Identification Certificate (EIC) from the Department of Public Safety, IF the law is precleared. **You will not be able to apply for an EIC unless and until preclearance is granted.** In order to obtain an EIC, you will need to bring the same type of documentation used to prove your identity that you would need if you were apply for a Driver’s License or Personal Identification card. If you do not currently have the required documentation to obtain an EIC, now would be a good time to start the process of obtaining the necessary documentation. The list of acceptable documents is at http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/DriverLicense/identificationrequirements.htm. **Helpful tip:** One of the acceptable pieces of “Supporting Identification” necessary is a Voter Registration Card. So if you are not already registered, have moved, or lost your card, you can get a new or updated certificate by going to http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/reqvr.shtml. For those of you who already have photo i.d., consider working with your local Party and other Democrats in your area on doing a voter registration drive (which you should be doing anyway since it’s one of the few activities NOT affected by redistricting).

If you need to obtain documentation to get an EIC, below are some links that might help you through the process:

- Department of Public Safety
- Social Security Administration
- Texas Vital Records
- Vital Records from other states

We’ll keep you posted as things develop. We’d also love to hear any stories you have to share from people who want to vote but lack the necessary ID that would be imposed under the new law if it is approved.

**Texas Voter I.D. Background Info**

- Petition to preserve Voting Rights
- Fight Back
- Letter To DOJ 1
- TDP Demands DOJ deny preclearance
- SOS Hiding the Truth
- Your Voices Heard
- TDP to Gonzales: Prove Your Claim
- SOS Voter ID Flip Flop
- Gonzales Claims Meritless
- Final Notice
- DOJ Blocks South Carolina’s Voter ID Law

Sincerely,

Sondra Haltom
Political Director