



ILLINOIS BALLOT INTEGRITY PROJECT

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Illinois Ballot Integrity Project to Oppose Proposed New Voter ID Law

Evanston, August 22, 2006. The Illinois Ballot Integrity Project announced today that it will oppose the Voter ID legislation proposed by State Representative Ron Stephens (R-102nd District). "We agree with East St. Louis Election Board counsel, John Kurowski, that the proposal to require a photo ID to vote is unconstitutional," said Bob Wilson, acting general counsel for the Illinois Ballot Integrity Project and chair of the Cook County chapter of IBIP. "This is nothing more than another blatantly partisan attempt to disenfranchise poor, elderly and disabled voters. It follows the party strategy implemented in states like Georgia, Indiana and Missouri," he added, "Representative Stephens wants to bring the poll-tax to Illinois." Wilson vowed that IBIP will file suit to block voter ID requirements if Stephen's bill passes the General Assembly and is signed into law.

"This has the potential to disenfranchise hundreds of thousands of Illinois voters," said Larry Quick, the Illinois Ballot Integrity Project's state chairman. "Representative Stephens asks, 'How many people don't have an ID?' Well, here's your answer, we estimate that as many as 11% or 570,000 Illinois voters don't have a photo ID, and many of those would have to pay a fee for ID like a driver's license or the documents needed to get a state ID," Quick added.

Yesterday in Missouri, testimony was heard before Cole County Circuit Judge Richard Callahan on efforts to block and declare unconstitutional the law requiring people to show a Missouri or federal government-issued photo ID to vote. Commenting on the Missouri suit, some election officials said they expected a dramatic increase in provisional ballots, as much as 20%, and increased costs because more people would be required to process them. Last Friday, Missouri Secretary of State Robin Carnahan said her office has determined that about 240,000 registered voters may lack proper identification for voting, a similar percentage to that projected in Illinois.

A U.S. appeals court recently upheld an injunction preventing the state of Georgia from enforcing a law requiring voters to show a state-issued ID card. Last October, U.S. District Judge Harold L. Murphy said Georgia's law appeared to violate the Constitution. He likened the law to a "Jim Crow-era poll tax that required residents, most of them black, to pay back taxes before voting," according to a Washington Post article of October 28, 2005.

The Republican effort to introduce voter ID requirements in Illinois follows the conviction last year of five Democratic politicians from East St. on vote fraud charges. Democratic Party chairman Charles Powell Jr., 61, and Kelvin Ellis, 55, the city's former director of regulatory affairs, of felony conspiracy to commit

vote fraud. Also convicted were Democratic precinct committee members Sheila Thomas, 31, and Jesse Lewis, 56, and City Hall worker Yvette Johnson, 46. Ellis, Thomas, Lewis and Johnson also were convicted of one count of election fraud for allegedly paying at least one person to vote, or offering to do so, according to *The Record of Madison St. Clair*, in a legal journal article by Ann Knef, today.

"Illinois Republicans are trying to use East St. Louis vote fraud as a springboard to keep poor and disadvantaged voters from the polls," said Wilson. "Voter ID laws do nothing to prevent fraud, you simply have to ask someone if they have an ID before you offer to pay them." On the other hand, the proposed statute would deny equal protection to tens of thousands of Illinois voters and clearly violates the Constitution's equal protection clause as well as the Voting Rights Act."

"If you want to stop fraud in Illinois, a better place to look is at the unreliable, insecure and inaccurate electronic voting machines which cast invisible ballots that are counted by private companies with secret software behind closed doors," said Larry Quick. "Illinois has spent almost \$100 million taxpayer dollars buying these electronic voting machines and systems that aren't tested for security flaws," he added.

Representative Stephen's district includes parts of St. Clair County which spent over \$900,000 acquiring touch-screen devices, recommended by the voting machine company's sales representative, ostensibly to comply with the Help America Vote Act's (HAVA) requirements for greater access for disabled voters. However, the *Belleville News-Democrat* reported that not a single disabled voter showed up at the polls to use the new machines in the March 21, 2006 primary. "One wonders how many disabled voters will request the touch-screen in November?" asked Wilson, "Even five would put the cost at \$200,000 per ballot. With 5-year storage and maintenance costs projected at 135% of purchase price, St. Clair County can expect to spend another \$1.35 million before the 2010 election. With a couple of elections every year that would be 50 ballots for \$2.35 million or \$47,000 per ballot or nearly a quarter of a million dollars per election."

"Maybe the Illinois legislature ought to be investigating the costs to taxpayers of this type of extravagance rather than considering ways to repress the vote," said chairman Quick. "We urge Illinois voters to write and call their state representatives and senators and let them know they oppose a poll-tax in Illinois," he added.

The Illinois Ballot Integrity Project, a not-for-profit, non-partisan civic organization dedicated to the correction of election system deficiencies and ensuring fair, accurate, and completely transparent elections. The Mission of the Illinois Ballot Integrity Project is to inform and educate the public, media and government officials about important election integrity issues and to promote the adoption of legislation and policies designed to secure the democratic process.