

LD 34

Good Afternoon Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and members of the Veteran and Legal Affairs Committee,

My name is Jesse Hargrove. I live in Thorndike and teach Social Studies at Hermon High School. I also serve on the RSU 3 School Board, and the Thorndike Budget Committee. I submit testimony against ***LD 34, An Act to Require a Person to Show Photographic Identification for the Purpose of Voting.***

This bill is a solution in search of a problem, and frankly, I'm growing increasingly impatient with efforts that lack evidentiary merit, thus contradicting an educator's pedagogical mission to foster critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and civic mindedness. This bill is another example of efforts to sow unwarranted distrust in our election systems, to minimize the voice of citizen voters, and restrict access. In a land that preaches freedom and democracy, we ought to be spending our time debating ways to expand citizen engagement, increase voter turnout, and encourage the next generation to be informed and involved. Instead, this bill would place unneeded roadblocks in the pathway of democratic participation.

Maine elections are fair, and free of fraud. The Heritage Foundation lists Election Integrity as a top issue, and ranks Maine tied for 32nd in the nation. However, a deeper dive into the organization's Election Fraud Database, reveals only two substantiated cases of Voter Fraud, both occurring in 2010...over 12 years ago. According to the *Lincoln County News* the situations were discovered during a state-wide voting-fraud sweep. Then Assistant Attorney General Leanne Robbin said about the two cases, "These aren't people with an agenda...They're good-old-boys." The two cases of duplicate voting occurred on accident and

misunderstanding of law when owned property crosses municipalities. In either situation, a photo identification would have been unhelpful.

On the other hand Mississippi (ranked 22nd on the Heritage scorecard), contains just over twice Maine's population, has a strict photo identification requirement. Heritage Foundation shows 21 confirmed situations of voter fraud in the same time period dating back to 2010...over 10 times the number as Maine. The types of fraud in these cases include buying votes, illegal assistance, and voting out of district...cases that photo identification would not have prevented, and infinitesimally small in comparison to the actual number of ballots cast over the decade. New Hampshire, our New England neighbor with a similar population, is ranked 20th on the scorecard, and imposes an "acceptable" ID requirement. According to Heritage Foundation data, New Hampshire has charged 19 individuals with election fraud, the majority of which were duplicate voting charges, unimpeded by an identification requirement. Again, a miniscule number of cases over several election cycles, with hundreds of thousands of ballots. The data comes short of demonstrating the need, nor effectiveness of such measures.

As a twenty year educator, I have worked with students to instill a sense of civic mindedness, and to recognize the variety of ways, including voting, that Americans can actively participate in our democracy. In addition, we develop analytical skills and evidence based reasonings. *Findlaw* cites a 2012 *American National Elections Study* which demonstrates the most impacted by photo identification laws are young Americans (between 17 and 24 years), Black Americans, Hispanic Americans, and low income Americans. My students don't need extra hurdles as they transition to adulthood. The data from the Heritage Foundation demonstrates the integrity of Maine elections, as is, and the diligence of measures already in place.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jesse Hargrove
Thorndike, ME