

Testimony in Opposition to LD34: An Act to Require a Person to Show Photographic Identification for the Purpose of Voting

Good day, Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and the members of the Committee for Veterans and Legal Affairs.

My name is Richard Lamere, and I would like to share my real life testimonial as to why the proposed act LD-34 does not prevent voter fraud from happening, but instead actually acts as a catalyst for voter suppression for the unsheltered and impoverished. My experience begins with my choice to temporarily live out of my vehicle so I could save enough money to rent my own place. Not having a physical address prevented me from being able to transfer my driver's license to a Maine one. This was not an immediate problem for me before the safe I kept all my forms of identification in was stolen from my vehicle.

Even though I was born in this country I found myself in a rather awkward position where no employer could legally hire me. Laws with similar principles and properties to LD-34 more commonly known as E-verify actually made it illegal to hire this "Undocumented American" since they could not confirm my identity with the proper certified documents. Even though I had just as much of a right as any other individual to work, pay taxes and die in this country, the law stripped my capacity to do the first two.

With not having a living parent, and not having the knowledge of how social services operate that I do today, it took about 18 months to gain access to my birth certificate. Unknown to myself, or anyone I knew for that matter, a case manager was needed to sign an affidavit, attesting that they had verified my identity to successfully order my birth certificate from Florida. A process that took about another 3 months given the special process through which it was ordered. It's also worthy to note here the wait time to acquire a case manager is an absolute minimum of six weeks, or about 90 days before you can meet them in person as has been my experience. In this span of time I had lost my privilege of operating my vehicle/home (license expired April of 2020), ability to purchase tobacco and could not work legally in any traditional way. This legislation would have added the final insult to those injuries by telling me I do not have the right to be heard because someone might commit a crime so just to be safe I should take that punishment as well.

Another critical flaw that can be seen in this act as written would be the addresses needing to match what the local registrar or clerk has on file against your driver's license. If the two do not match this legislation would make the voter update their voter registration information before casting their ballot. This over-attention to irrelevant details taxes an already burdened system and will without doubt drive up the wait time to cast ballots on voting day. What if, like in my scenario above, you can't prove a physical address due to being unsheltered or just unprepared with the proper documents on hand?

When I think of democracy there is always this one quote that comes to my mind. "If you and I both have one dollar, and we swap dollars we are no better off than before. But if we both have an idea, and swap them with one another we both would have gained an idea". You can disagree with the other person's idea, or maybe adopt a part of it because it aligns with your values. Over time your ever-growing pool of swapped ideas becomes a melting pot with the wisdom of all the minds these thoughts have touched. This was how my grandparents explained our lineage and their immigration into the United States.