



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
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Voting Rights Advocates Clarify Rights of Voters in New Jersey

Trenton – With the voter registration deadline fast approaching on October 16th, the League of Women Voters of New Jersey, the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey, the New Jersey NAACP, and the Hall Institute of Public Policy – New Jersey came together today to dispel widespread misinformation that is causing voter confusion.

“The League of Women Voters of New Jersey and our colleagues are seriously concerned about the amount of incorrect information being circulated to voters,” said Toni Zimmer, President of the League of Women Voters of New Jersey. “The League has a toll-free voter assistance hotline and it’s been ringing off the hook with callers asking if they need to re-register to vote, or if they need to show photo identification at the polls. This type of false information has the potential to disenfranchise eligible voters, and that’s why we’re here today, to set things straight. The League does not want to see even one voter stay at home on Election Day because of this type of misinformation.”

At least 34 states have introduced legislation that would require voters to show photo identification in order to vote, and an additional four states have introduced legislation requesting that voters show photo identification to register *or* to vote. These restrictive voter id requirements would disenfranchise many elderly, minority, and low-income voters.

“There has been a lot of press coverage this election season about Pennsylvania’s restrictive voter identification law,” said acting ACLU-NJ Executive Director Ed Barocas. “Generally in New Jersey, unless you are a newly-registered voter, you should not be required to show identification when you go to the polls.”

In New Jersey, it is only permissible for a poll worker to ask a newly-registered voter to present identification if that voter did not provide the required identification information on the original registration form, or if the identification information was indicated on the form but could not be verified.

Parts of New Jersey share the same media market with Pennsylvania, adding to the confusion over voter laws.

Advocates are concerned that misinformation is more prevalent in minority communities. “Voting rights are under attack in this country and voters of color are disproportionately disenfranchised,” said James Harris, President of the New Jersey NAACP. “We have struggled

for too long and have worked too hard to secure our rights to see even more African-Americans and other minorities kept from the polling place because of rumors, misinformation, and because of voter suppression tactics in other states.”

"The distinguishing characteristic of our American democracy is the ability to hold to a high standard of fairness in elections," says Michael P. Riccards, Executive Director of the Hall Institute of Public Policy - New Jersey. "Whether it's an election for the Presidency or a local school board, the quality of our government depends on voters who are informed and secure in exercising their voting rights.”

The coalition of organizations has a number of resources where voters can find reliable information. As they have for every election, the League and the ACLU-NJ have teamed up to print and distribute 20,000 cards to inform voters of their rights and how to avoid problems when casting a ballot on Election Day. The cards contain a voters' bill of rights and other critical information, such as how to vote by mail-in ballot, use of provisional ballots and what to do if a voter encounters a problem while trying to cast a ballot. It also provides answers to frequently asked questions, including information about identification and finding a polling place. The cards are available for download at www.lwvnj.org and www.aclu-nj.org.

The League and the Hall Institute of Public Policy - New Jersey have also produced a video that walks voters through every step of the voting process. It was created to help to first-time voters who might be unsure of what occurs once they enter the polling place. The video is available at www.lwvnj.org and www.hallnj.org.

On Election Day, November 6th, from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., the League of Women Voters of New Jersey will staff its toll-free voter assistance Hotline to answer questions from voters and offer assistance with problems they may encounter at the polls. The Hotline is open year-round during regular business hours to address questions from the public. The number is **1-800-792-VOTE (8683)**.

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The League of Women Voters of New Jersey is a non-partisan political organization that was founded in April 1920 as a successor to the New Jersey Woman Suffrage Association. Today the League encourages informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The goal of the League of Women Voters is to empower citizens to shape better communities worldwide.