

Press Release:

ACLU Urges South Carolina Senate To Oppose Voter ID Bill

Legislation Would Create Excessive Burdens On Voting Rights

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COLUMBIA, SC – The South Carolina Senate will soon vote on a measure requiring voters to show state-issued photo identification before casting a ballot. The American Civil Liberties Union strongly urge Senators to vote against the bill.

The Voter Identification bill (H. 3418) would make it impossible for thousands of already-registered voters in South Carolina to exercise the fundamental democratic right to vote. The state Election Commission reports that an estimated 178,175 South Carolina voters do not have a driver's license or identification card issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles.

There has been no credible evidence of voter impersonation in South Carolina.

The following can be attributed to Victoria Middleton, Executive Director of the ACLU South Carolina Office:

"There is nothing more fundamental to our democracy than the right to vote. This onerous voter ID legislation would not prevent fraud, but instead create excessive burdens on voting rights. South Carolina Election Commission officials have stated that our recent history holds no examples of impersonation of voters and no evidence that anyone has tried to steal another citizen's vote. This bill only serves to disfranchise South Carolina voters.

"Our leaders should be in the business of encouraging full participation in our democratic process, not imposing barriers between Americans and the voting booth that are both unconstitutional and highly expensive. The Senate should oppose this and any legislation that would limit qualified Americans' ability to exercise their right to vote."

The following can be attributed to Meredith Bell-Platts, staff attorney with the ACLU Voting Rights Project:

"South Carolina already has one of the toughest identification laws in the nation. There has been no credible evidence of voter impersonation, and the bill's proponents have failed to show why the current protections are inadequate to deter or prevent fraud. This bill is a solution in search of a problem.

"In a democracy, it is essential that our electoral rules be fair and impartial. The real threat of vote theft comes from the undue impact of voter ID laws on people who belong to groups such as student, poor, minority, elderly and disabled voters, who are less likely to have ready access to the documents required to obtain a photo ID. The birth certificates, passports and other documents required to get an ID are not available free of charge."

More information on the ACLU South Carolina Office can be found at: www.aclusouthcarolina.org

More information about the ACLU Voting Rights Project can be found at: www.aclu.org/voting-rights