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House Members Approve Voter ID Legislation

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The House took action this week to pass legislation intended to protect the integrity of the voting process. The members of the House passed two pieces of legislation - one a proposed constitutional amendment and the other a statutory change – that would put in place a requirement that voters must show photo identification before casting their ballots.

This is an issue that has been debated in Missouri and in other states for years now. In fact, Missouri saw a voter ID bill signed into law in 2006 only to see it later struck down by the Missouri Supreme Court. Since that time, the legislature has continued to work on the issue with the goal of finding a compromise that would require voters to prove their identity before voting without disenfranchising Missourians who don't already have a photo ID.

The legislation passed this week is meant to address the primary concern of critics by providing a government-issued photo ID at no charge to anyone who doesn't have one. An amendment added on the floor also provides those without proper identification with a means to obtain a free copy of a birth certificate, which would be needed to obtain a government-issued ID. In addition, to prevent the requirement from being a barrier to those who cannot obtain an ID and those born before 1950 who may not have documentation such as a birth certificate, the bill would allow these Missourians to vote by provisional ballot.

The House has advanced similar proposals in the past only to see them bog down in the Senate. As we send these pieces of legislation to the other side of the building, we will do our best to work toward a compromise with our Senate colleagues so that we can move these bills all the way through the legislative process. Keep in mind that the proposed constitutional amendment will require a vote of the people in order to be approved. Only if the people of Missouri decide that they want a system of voter identification will one then be put in place.

In the meantime, I am interested to hear your thoughts on this issue. Do you think it is important to require a photo ID to vote just as we require photo IDs to pick up a prescription or board a plane? Or do you believe a photo ID requirement would serve as a barrier to prevent some Missourians from voting? I look forward to hearing your responses.

Tila Hubrecht
151st State Representative

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