

Passed by unanimous consent  
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STUDENT GOVERNMENT

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

1 University Station, A6210 • Austin, TX 78712-0180

(512) 471-3166 • Fax: (512) 471-3408 • <http://www.utsu.org>

## AR 1 In Opposition to a Voter Photo ID Law

Author: Jimmy Talarico

Sponsor: Representatives Nathan Bunch, Alex Ferraro, Andy Jones, John Lawler, Melessa Rodriguez, Jimmy Talarico, Thaddeus Woody,

### Section 1: Overview

**WHEREAS**, Legal requirements of the voting process are one of three factors that exerts substantial influence on voter turnout, along with the socioeconomic status of the potential voter and the political context of the election<sup>i</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, Stricter voter identification requirements (for example, requiring voters to present photo ID compared to simply signing their names or presenting their voter registration card) are correlated with reduced turnout<sup>i</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, More than 1 million voting-age Texans do not have a driver's license, the easiest form of identification to produce<sup>ii</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, When the costs of voting (i.e. time, hassle, and difficulty) increase, the likelihood that students will vote decreases<sup>i</sup>; and

### Section 2: The Current Voter Photo ID Proposal

**WHEREAS**, The current voter photo ID proposal in the Texas Legislature (SB 362 & HB 3556) requires that all voters present a form of photo identification or two forms of non-photo identification to an election officer at the polling place<sup>v</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, The proposed Texas voter photo ID system would be one of the three most stringent and restrictive voting requirements in the country if enacted<sup>i</sup>; and

### Section 3: Prevention of Voter Impersonation

**WHEREAS**, After spending millions of dollars on a 2005-2006 state-wide voter fraud investigation, Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott did not find or prosecute a single case of voter impersonation<sup>ii</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, There is no empirical evidence that a voting system requiring voters to produce a photo identification document prevents the ineligible from voting, and there is strong empirical evidence that a voting system requiring voters to produce photo identification may prevent the eligible from voting<sup>i</sup>; and

### Section 4: Harms of a Voter Photo ID Law for Students

**WHEREAS**, Unless out-of state students are to change their out-of state driver's licenses, these student voters will be forced to vote absentee or provisionally, lowering voter efficacy and making the voting process more bureaucratic, time-consuming, and cumbersome<sup>iii</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, For out-of-state students, changing state residency can also create complications with certain scholarship guidelines or financial aid contracts<sup>iii</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, A dramatic change in the state election code could spawn widespread confusion at the campus polling locations in Texas for students, faculty, and poll workers, putting stress on the already demanding environment of the polling place<sup>i</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, Scrutiny of ID could cause legal confusion and longer lines, or cause voters to cast more provisional ballots; this scrutiny will either discourage voters or make voting seem a hassle<sup>i</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, The proposed voter identification legislation does not explicitly allow student IDs issued by Texas universities to be used at the polls<sup>v</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, Vagueness in the law can cause confusion at the polling place, as was witnessed in New York State during the 2004 general election, when it was discovered that election officials had wildly varying interpretations of the state's voter identification requirement<sup>i</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, UT student IDs do not display expiration dates, and other states with similar laws such as Indiana have declared such IDs invalid on those grounds; and

**WHEREAS**, Student UT IDs can only be purchased or replaced at the ID center in the Flawn Academic Center (FAC) in central campus<sup>vi</sup>, but a majority of students live in off-campus precincts that require students to vote at their precinct polling places, located at significant distances from the FAC ID Center (Riverside Drive, Shoal Crest Ave., North Hills Drive, Hampton Road)<sup>vii</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, The FAC ID Center is only open Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 5:00pm, not encompassing parts of the two most popular voting periods, before 9:00am and after 5:00pm<sup>vi</sup>; therefore

**BE IT RESOLVED**, That the Student Government of The University of Texas at Austin believes voter photo ID requirements would place costly and time-consuming new bureaucratic barriers between voters and the ballot box that will make it harder for students to vote.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Student Government of The University of Texas at Austin strongly opposes the enactment of any voter photo ID requirements that make it harder for students to vote.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Student Government of The University of Texas at Austin strongly supports efforts by the Texas Legislature to make the entire voting process (i.e. registration, election day voting, absentee voting) more responsive to the needs of students.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a copy of this resolution be sent to the Office of the Governor of Texas, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Texas, the Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives, the Texas House Elections Committee, the Board of Regents of The University of Texas System, the Office of the Chancellor of The University of Texas System, the Office of the President, the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs, Office of Governmental Relations, and the Office of the Dean of Students.

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<sup>i</sup> The Eagleton Institute of Politics, and The Moritz College of Law. "Report to the U. S. Election Assistance Commission On Best Practices to Improve Voter Identification Requirements Pursuant to the ." Rev. of HELP AMERICA VOTE ACT OF 2002. National Public Radio. 2009. 21 Mar. 2009 <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9248783>>.

<sup>ii</sup> Lindell, Chuck. "Voter ID: 1 million voters without a driver's license?" The Austin American-Statesman 10 Mar. 2009. 21 Mar. 2009 <[http://www.statesman.com/blogs/content/shared-gen/blogs/austin/investigative/entries/2009/03/10/voter\\_id\\_1\\_million\\_voters\\_with.html#postcomment](http://www.statesman.com/blogs/content/shared-gen/blogs/austin/investigative/entries/2009/03/10/voter_id_1_million_voters_with.html#postcomment)>.

<sup>iii</sup> Voter ID Laws." Student Association for Voter Empowerment . 22 Mar. 2009 <[http://www.savevoting.org/i\\_vb\\_voteridlaws.html](http://www.savevoting.org/i_vb_voteridlaws.html)>.

<sup>v</sup> Texas . Senate. SB 362. Ed. Troy Fraser. 23 Mar. 2009 <<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/tlodocs/81R/billtext/html/SB00362I.htm>>.

<sup>vi</sup> "ID Center." Information Technology Services. The University of Texas at Austin". 22 Mar. 2009 <<http://www.utexas.edu/its/idcenter/index.php>>.

<sup>vii</sup> Travis County Tax Office, "Travis County Precinct Map". <<http://www.traviscountytax.org/gis/index.htm>>

<sup>viii</sup> Office of Indiana Secretary of State, "PhotoID.IN.gov." <<http://www.in.gov/sos/photoid/>>