



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF FLORIDA

540 Beverly Court, Tallahassee, FL 32301-2506
Voice: 850/224-2545 • Fax: 850/222-4485 • E-mail: lwvfl@comcast.net
www.lwvfla.org

STATEMENT OF MARILYNN WILLS, VICE PRESIDENT, LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF FLORIDA, FOR THE COMMITTEE ON ETHICS AND ELECTIONS OF THE FLORIDA STATE SENATE on 23 JANUARY 2007

- I would like to address today the Florida statute and policies that require all new voter registrants' identifying numbers, which are the driver's license number, Florida identification card number or last four digits of the social security number, be successfully matched with the corresponding state database prior to that applicant becoming a registered voter.
- This statute burdens eligible voters and violates federal law.
- Matching an applicant's registration number with information in a database is an error prone and unreliable process. Both human and computer errors are endemic in the inputting, maintaining, transferring, and matching of data.
- For example, a study by Abt Associates determined that in a Florida social services database, as many as 26 percent of the records included city names spelled incorrectly, including 40 different spellings of Fort Lauderdale.
- These matching requirements are keeping numerous eligible voters off the registration rolls and have particularly negative consequences in communities of color.
- For example, many Latino citizens use both their maternal and paternal last names, which frequently cause matching problems. In African-American communities it is common to modify spellings of names spelled differently in other communities, which can easily lead to data entry errors and cause matching problems.
- Additionally, a woman's married name might not match against an outdated database containing her maiden name.
- Florida should not go beyond its existing methods for determining eligibility, which include requiring all voters to present an ID at the polls in order to vote by a regular ballot.
- Although the Help America Vote Act requires every state to obtain or assign a unique identifying number for new voter registration applicants, it does not make the "verification" of one's ID number a pre-requisite for one's eligibility to vote. In fact, requiring a successful match as a necessary precondition for registration contradicts the plain language and legislative history of HAVA.

Page 17 of 36

- The Florida legislature can change this statute and restore the intent of HAVA's matching provision -- to ensure that states maintain current voter lists and to ease the identification requirements that HAVA establishes.
- We look forward to working with the legislature on this issue. While all of us want the voting rolls to be accurate, we also want all eligible voters to be able to meaningfully participate in the election. A 'no match, no vote' rule will mistakenly reject too many registration applications.
- Thank you for your time and for this opportunity to testify.

