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## **Allegations of Fraudulent Registration Emphasize Need for Voter ID**

JEFFERSON CITY — Although an important piece of legislation passed this year was recently overruled by the Missouri Supreme Court, recent allegations show just how much the new law is needed. Legislation requiring voters to present photo identification at the polls was implemented to reduce voter fraud. However, just days before the state Supreme Court ruled the new law unconstitutional, election officials in St. Louis and Kansas City announced they are finding thousands of potentially fraudulent voter-registration cards turned in by an advocacy group. These problematic registration efforts underscore the need for the voter ID law, and lawmakers will revisit this issue next year to pass a new law that will reduce voter fraud and pass constitutional muster.

According to recent articles in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and Kansas City Star, allegations of faulty voter registration have been waged against the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, or ACORN. St. Louis Election Board members have said they've found approximately 1,500 potentially fraudulent registration cards, and the Kansas City director of elections has said approximately 3,000 applications raise questions. These applications run the gamut of crooked registration practices, including suspicious signatures, underage applicants, errant Social Security numbers, and even registration cards for dead people. And election officials expect to find even more bogus applications among those that remain to be examined.

City attorneys plan to review the questionable applications from ACORN to determine if prosecution is necessary. I am also encouraged that the organization's election counsel is welcoming prosecutions of workers who have committed voter fraud. He has said that the group works to monitor employees, and it pays workers \$8 an hour to register voters, not according to how many registrations they collect. Nevertheless, fraudulent registration cards appear to be getting through.

This case emphasizes how easy it is for voter fraud to take place — and why regulation is needed. Under the recently overruled voter ID law, Missourians would be required to submit a government-issued photo ID, such as an unexpired Missouri driver's license, non-driver's license, passport or military ID, in order to vote. The law would require the state to provide IDs for those who cannot afford them, and those without IDs could cast provisional ballots in the upcoming election if they have a non-photo ID and sign an affidavit. Disabled Missourians, those with a sincerely held religious opposition to photo IDs, and individuals 65 or older could also vote in this year's election if they sign an authorized affidavit affirming their identity.

This measure provided reasonable standards and offered needed protections against voter fraud, which undermines our democratic principles and devalues the rights of citizens who have legitimately cast their ballots. The sponsor of the struck-down legislation has said he will reintroduce the measure next year to impose strict limitations on voter fraud while meeting the court's standards. These instances in St. Louis and Kansas City reiterate the need for legislation combating voter fraud, and Missouri lawmakers will meet that challenge in the coming session.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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