



Gibbons Capitol Report  
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### **Working Together to Make Sure Everyone's Vote Counts**

Voting is our most basic right and awesome privilege as citizens. In the Declaration of Independence, our founding fathers guaranteed us the rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And to have those rights, governments would be formed "deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

Elections are the process that the people use to shape their government and we want to make sure everyone's vote counts. It is incredibly important that we have a fair and honest election system, where every Missourian can vote easily, vote once and know their vote counts. Without that, trust is lost and government fails.

#### **Voter Fraud**

Unfortunately, voter fraud is rampant in Missouri. In 2004, Auditor Claire McCaskill identified more than 24,000 questionable registrations in St. Louis City. Similar problems have been found in elections prior to 2004. In 2000, at least 1,500 fraudulent ballots were cast in the St. Louis area including 14 dead people who voted.

And the problem doesn't stop there. In November 2005, the Department of Justice sued Missouri for having some of the worst voter registration rolls in the country. Secretary of State Robin Carnahan acknowledged the number of people listed on the voter registration rolls exceeds the voting age population in at least 29 election jurisdictions across Missouri. Reynolds County, for example, has 50 percent more registered voters than the county's voting age population.

#### **Missouri Voter Protection Act**

Honest votes count less when people who don't exist or people who vote more than once are counted. Each of our votes must count and that is why we have introduced the Missouri Voter Protection Act this year. Its aim is to protect the right of everyone to vote in fair and honest elections. It would enhance our election process by cracking down on election fraud, reforming voter registration, protecting all voters from polling place intimidation and extending provisional ballots to include all ballot issues and races.

## **Photo ID**

The most recognized change this legislation would make is to require voters to show photo identification at the polls. To me, a photo ID makes sense. It will help election judges know for sure who is voting so every vote will count.

Currently in Missouri, voters must already show a form of I.D. with their address, ranging from their driver's license to a utility bill. Adding a photo to that ID is just one step further. And in today's society, you have to have one to do almost everything-from cashing a check to renting a movie to flying on a plane.

95 percent of Missourians who are voting age (at least 18) already have a driver's license. That leaves approximately 170,000 Missourians who do not currently have a driver's license. Some of these people may have other accepted forms of government issued photo I.D's. Under this legislation, for those who don't have any form of photo I.D., the state will issue them one – free of charge.

That free photo ID won't harm their right to privacy, because they will only need it to vote. We will also have mobile units that will visit places including nursing homes and veterans' homes to take photos for these IDs. That way, we'll be able to go to the people who can't travel as easily.

Disabled Missourians who are homebound don't need a photo ID. The bill allows any disabled Missourian to cast an absentee ballot. They just need to sign an affidavit that comes with the ballot to their home that they are indeed the person who is voting.

And in the case a voter doesn't bring a photo I.D. to the poll, they can still cast a provisional ballot that will be verified and counted when the votes are certified.

We must work together. That is the essence of the legislative process. And by working together, we can make sure that it is easy for everyone in Missouri to vote, and at the same time, hard for anyone to cheat. This way, all of our votes really will count. That means a government truly elected of the people, by the people and for the people of Missouri. And that's good for all of us.