



MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

Delbert Scott
28th Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 416
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

**A Weekly Column for the
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**Contact: Debbie Poire
(573) 751-8793**

Voter Identification Could Help Ensure Fair Elections

Recently, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled to uphold (6-3) an Indiana statute requiring voters to present a photo ID before voting. The court says such a requirement “surely does not qualify as a substantial burden on the right to vote, or even represent a significant increase over the usual burdens of voting.”

If this Indiana statute sounds familiar, that’s because Missouri had similar legislation in 2006. I sponsored a measure (Senate Bill 1014) two years ago that would have required Missourians to submit a government-issued photographic identification card in order to vote. My measure would have prohibited individuals from using paychecks, utility bills or bank statements as valid forms of identification. Senate Bill 1014 would have also required the state to issue photo IDs to all citizens who could not afford them.

Senate Bill 1014 contained several exemptions to the photo-ID requirement for the then upcoming 2006 elections. Elderly and mentally and physically disabled Missourians, those with a “sincerely held” religious opposition to photo IDs, and individuals 65 or older could still vote in the 2006 election if they signed an authorized affidavit affirming their identity. Individuals without photo IDs could also vote in 2006 elections if their identity was affirmed by election officials at the polling station. Those without photo IDs could also cast a provisional ballot if they had a non-photo ID and signed affidavit. All exceptions would have been cancelled after the 2006 elections. The General Assembly passed Senate Bill 1014 and on June 14, 2006, the governor signed the bill into law.

MORE

However, the Missouri Supreme Court struck down (6-1) the law, saying the measure was unconstitutional. The court wrote that obtaining a photo ID “creates a heavy burden on the fundamental right to vote.”

Missouri is among 25 states that require some sort of voter identification, but not a photo ID. By providing a photo ID in order to cast a vote, our state has the opportunity to take control of voter fraud.

The U.S. Supreme Court’s recent ruling shows that our state’s attempt in 2006 to provide fair elections was a monumental step in the right direction for citizens in Missouri. If you have questions or comments about the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling, voter fraud in Missouri, or any other issue, please feel free to contact me at 573-751-8793 or by e-mail at: delbertscott@senate.state.mo.us.

Senator Delbert Scott represents the people of Barton, Benton, Cedar, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Pettis, Polk and St. Clair counties in the Missouri Senate.

