

January 22, 2009

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Senator Jason Crowell – Serving Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Madison, Mississippi, Perry, and Scott Counties.

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## Ensuring the Integrity of Missouri Elections

The right to vote in a free and fair election is the most fundamental element of a democratic-republic. Without it, officials are not accountable to the public, and if they are not accountable, there is no guarantee that our rights are protected. This is why it is such a serious offense when a person or organization abuses this right. Recently, an Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) worker was indicted after submitting forged voter registration cards for the general election. This indictment is clear evidence that something must be done to protect the integrity of elections in our state and enable poll workers to verify that voters are who they say they are.



Unfortunately, voter fraud is not something new in Missouri's recent past. In 2000, election officials admitted that at least 143 voters in St. Louis were improperly allowed to register and cast ballots. In 2004, six people pled guilty

to signing the names of friends, relatives, a prison inmate and five dead people on voter registration cards. In 2006, four ACORN workers were indicted in Kansas City for turning in false voter registration applications. The four were sentenced the following year.

The best way to ensure that our elections stay honest and fair is to pass photo I.D. requirements. In 2006, the General Assembly passed and Governor Blunt signed a measure that mirrored legislation I sponsored that required voters to show photo identification at the polls. However, it was struck down by the Missouri Supreme Court as a violation of the state constitution saying it "creates a heavy burden on the fundamental right to vote." Last year, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled differently on a similar Indiana voter I.D. law. Already, 25 states, including Missouri, require some form of identification at voting polls. Seven of those require or can request a photo I.D. Last year, a constitutional amendment was proposed in the General Assembly that would have put a measure on the ballot to clear the way for a voter I.D. requirement. While it passed in the House, we did not get an opportunity to address the issue in the Senate.

Requiring voters to have an I.D. is not intended to be an obstacle for

legitimate voters. Today, we cannot complete a common errand like cashing a check without a photo I.D., so I don't believe it will be a significant burden to require one for voting. In fact, more than 95 percent of Missourians already have an acceptable photo I.D. In addition, the state should take on the responsibility and cost of issuing photo I.D. cards for voters who do not already have them.



Our democratic system of government is based on the assumption that the votes we cast will be lawful. Cracking down on voter fraud without limiting voters' rights ensures the integrity of the elections. The best way in which we can protect the integrity of our elections is by passing a state constitutional amendment requiring a photo ID, which would be sent to the voters either in November or in a special election.

To defend the reliability of our elections, I plan to introduce legislation that will require anyone who votes in a public election to provide a photo ID that establishes that they are a U.S. citizen residing in the state of Missouri. This legislation will also include funds that will allow the state to provide a photo ID to those who do not already possess one at no cost to the individual.

## Contact Me

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. Please feel free to contact me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2459. You may write to me at Jason Crowell; Missouri Senate; State Capitol; Jefferson City, MO 65101, or email me at: [jcrowell@senate.mo.gov](mailto:jcrowell@senate.mo.gov) or visit me on the web at <http://www.senate.mo.gov/crowell>.

### Contact Information

**Capitol Office**  
State Capitol Building  
Room 323  
Jefferson City, MO 65101

**Website:**  
<http://www.senate.mo.gov/crowell>

**Phone Number:**  
573.751.2459  
**Fax:**  
573.522.9289