

License to vote

Please don't believe the excuses given for passage in the Ohio House of House Bill 159, requiring the use of a state-issued ID to combat the evils of voter fraud. This bill, now in the Senate, claims to address rampant voter fraud when, both nationally and in our state, instances of voter fraud have been proven to be almost nonexistent.

The Brennan Center for Justice notes that in 2002 and 2004, only four cases of ineligible voters either voting or trying to vote were found out of more than 9 million votes cast statewide.

The bill's unconstitutionality should be obvious. You would, in essence, have to pay the state to be able to vote. The Toledo Blade referred to this legislation as a 21st century poll tax, and that's why its passage is important to the current majority.

The effects of the legislation would be felt mostly by those physically or monetarily unable to obtain the required ID, making them ineligible to vote, in hopes that the party for which they most often vote would suffer.

But let's look at it at a more personal level. My grandmother was a councilwoman in Munroe Falls in the 1940s, and helped buy the first fire truck there with proceeds from rummage and bake sales. But she never had a driver's license, a passport or a military ID. According to this legislation, this upstanding citizen wouldn't be able to vote.

Then there's our son's talented, hard-working friend, who also has no driver's license — only a Kent State ID, which wouldn't be accepted under the proposed legislation.

I ask you: Should people like these be punished by having the very thing that lets us be free taken away from them? All our lives, the notion that we should encourage others to vote was what we were taught.

Now that notion is being turned on its head to protect us from the fanciful specter of voter fraud. Please, it's time to pay attention to this kind of thinly veiled disenfranchisement. Who won't get to vote next?

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