

Michigan Election Reform Alliance.org - Testimony

Statement to the House Committee on Redistricting and Elections

February 23, 2012

Regarding S 754 Photo ID to Register

From: Jan BenDor, Ypsilanti, MI, 734-484-1744, jan@bendor.org

Jan BenDor is a former Deputy Clerk in Michigan, an accredited Michigan Election Administrator, and Statewide Coordinator of MERA.

S 754 Photo ID to Register.

This provision should be dropped.

The requirement that a citizen present a photo ID to register adds no security value to Michigan elections. To the contrary, it promotes a risk to security. This proposal represents “security theater,” the illusion of security, which risks lulling officials into inattention to what really matters in secure voter registration.

A photo ID is not a standard for identity. As MERA has discussed at length in our statement on the Signature as Gold Standard for Identity (submitted separately), a photo ID is easily faked. No voter registration official has a means to verify the authenticity of a photo ID since there is no official record of it for reference. There is a centralized database of Drivers Licenses that is totally separate from the Qualified Voter File. The Driver License Database retains a low resolution signature image which is exported to the QVF with a voter’s application to register, but no photo image is exported. Officials have no access to authenticate other approved forms of government-issued photo ID.

In contrast, the voter’s physical signature on the affidavit to apply to register to vote, constitutes a witnessed document which is then stored on that voter’s Master Card for future reference.

When an official witnesses the signing of the affidavit, what matters is that the voter understands and affirmatively indicates that he or she is in fact a U.S. citizen, a resident at the given address, and age 18 or will be at the time of the next election. If the official is distracted by another, irrelevant matter, this will inevitably cause inattention to the primary process of a voter registration.