I am writing to object to House File 590 as amended. This piece of legislation clearly does nothing to empower voters in the state of Iowa; rather, it suppresses voter participation, especially the elderly, the disabled and the poor. The majority party’s reasoning for increased voter restrictions (e.g., shorten early voting period from 29 days to 18 days, restrict the number of absentee voter collection boxes, aggressive purging of voter registration lists, and set what I consider Draconian measures aimed at county auditors who attempt to enhance voter participation) is that “the measures would ensure uniform election procedures across Iowa's 99 counties, uphold the integrity of Iowa's elections and make sure county auditors follow the law.” (Stephen Gruber-Miller, Des Moines Register, 02/17/21) It is hard to accept this reasoning in the face of the highest voter turnout in Iowa history for the 2020 election, not to mention the record turnout for the primary early in 2020. And, as of February 17, 2021, the AP reported “no major allegations of fraud have surfaced.” (AP News, Ryan J. Foley, 02/17/21)

My grandfather used to say, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”

So what are the real reasons why Republican legislators (supported by administration leaders such as Secretary of State Paul Pate and Governor Kim Reynolds) here in Iowa and all over the United States are writing and filing voter suppression bills? Here in Iowa one proposed explanation is that Republicans want to maintain their lock on state government. While I agree with this, I also believe that the reasons for the nation-wide push for voter suppression goes much deeper.

First, many Republicans believe “the Big Lie” perpetrated by former President Donald Trump who claimed, without evidence, that the election was stolen from him. This, and the ex-president’s claims dating back to 2015 that if he didn’t win the election it was rigged, has led to a dangerous and unprecedented attack on the very foundation of our democracy; free and fair elections. Hence, the Republicans who buy into the Big Lie would want to jump on to the suppress-the-vote bandwagon, like State Sen. Jason Schultz, R-Schleswig who said that he believes that Iowans were disenfranchised in 2020 "by some shady dealings in five cities around the country" and that "I think that shows what happens when you don't strengthen your election system." (he did not provide evidence) (Stephen Gruber-Miller, Des Moines Register, 02/17/21). This, even in the face of the fact that the 2020 election was the most secure and fraud-free election ever as testified to by everyone who investigated allegations of voter fraud (e.g., state election officials, the head of the national cyber security agency, US AG William Barr).

This slavish adherence to the Big Lie leads to my second, and even more worrisome reason, that voter suppression is a continuation of Jim Crow. It is based on white supremacist ideology that proposes that white heterosexual males are the rightful power brokers, and that other races, the disabled and others deemed “less than” are not fit to have a say in government. Watching how Hitler turned a democratic Germany into a dictatorship is quite stunningly similar to what is happening in the United States, especially during ex-president Trump’s presidency. For example, Joseph Goebbels, Hitler’s chief propagandist, defined the Big Lie as follows:

“If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. The lie can be maintained only for such time as the State can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the State.” ([Joseph Goebbels On the "Big Lie" (jewishvirtuallibrary.org)](https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/joseph-goebbels-on-the-quot-big-lie-quot)

Further, Hitler’s conspiracy theories were born out of fear, anger and bigotry, not fact. (TED-Ed, How did Hitler rise to power? Alex Gendler and Anthony Hazard, YouTube)

Voter suppression is not about securing elections; it’s about maintaining power on a political and social level. Voter suppression is not about democracy; it’s about building and maintaining an authoritarian state. And voter suppression is not about freedom; it is about taking away freedom in the service of supporting a white supremacist agenda. Voter suppression legislation is a slippery slope towards authoritarian control and is antithetical to a democracy.

I know that I will support any legal challenge to this bill (and the companion bill in the Iowa Senate). This bill is discriminatory on several levels as it disenfranchises whole classes of voters (e.g., the elderly, the disabled, the poor). I know I will support the John Lewis Voting Rights Act that will restore policies that protect a citizen’s right to vote. I will support get-out-the-vote efforts that help citizens exercise their right to vote.

Rather than voter suppression policies, legislators would better serve all the citizens of Iowa by supporting what worked so well during the 2020 election; state-wide distribution of absentee ballot request forms, 29-day early voting period (and consider returning to the 40-day early voting period), and ample numbers of early voting polling stations and drop boxes dispersed for ease of access. Legislators should support local election officials who enhance voter turnout rather than threaten them with Draconian punishment for not following the party line. Legislators should ensure ease of voter registration, including same-day registration (we have the technology to ensure proper identification). Along with this, stop aggressive purging of the voter registration lists. And, finally, write legislation (using the John Lewis Voting Rights Act as a template) that ensures that every registered voter in Iowa has the opportunity to vote in a free, fair and secure election—like they have been over the last several decades.

Kevin Krumvieda

1250 32nd Street, NE

Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52402