

Sophia Stone HF 516, Against

Thank you House State Government committee and Chairperson Rizer for the opportunity to speak today.

I'm here today to speak out against House File 516 on behalf of transgender individuals across Iowa. Updating a person's legal documents to reflect their gender is an incredibly arduous and expensive process, for many individuals it is impractical or even impossible to update the gender marker on their IDs. According to a survey by the National Center for Transgender Equality, 40 percent of transgender citizens do not have an accurate driver's license and 74 percent do not have an accurate US passport.

In fact, in the 5 years I have been running Transformations, a transgender support group, I have had the privilege to help out dozens of transgender people in updating their legal documents, but I have yet to be able to update my own. Every time I hand over my driver's license to a stranger I am also handing over my safety. I don't know if they will notice the masculine name that I was given at birth or the little M next to Sex. I just have to hope they either won't notice or won't care. Unfortunately that hasn't always been the case.

When I went to vote in the 2014 elections one of the volunteers at my polling place attempted to deny me my right to vote when she noticed that my name did not reflect my gender identity. Luckily another volunteer intervened and I was able to vote. If this law had been in place back then I almost certainly would have been turned away. If this law is enacted many citizens will be denied the ability to vote, to participate in this country's democratic process, and that is simply unacceptable. I ask this committee to oppose this bill. Thank you.

Hello and Thanks again for the opportunity to speak. I'm

Matt Chapman from Waukee Iowa. Voter

disenfranchisement is something I know about. When I was eighteen I was homeless and wound up with felony. That felony followed me around for thirty years. I probably could have applied to be reinstated but like a lot of folks who don't go to high school the process seemed daunting. Then Secretary Vilsack gave me the right to vote back when I was forty five. To not be able to participate is a feeling I understand and I will do all that I can to help folks in that situation. Now I also live in Dallas county where almost 6000 votes were lost and just resurfaced recently. And I would point out that one person was charged with fraud for voting twice. So I think we can all agree that we need to put 6000 times as much effort to fix things at the auditing level as we do fixing virtually non existent voter fraud. Please present some evidence of this fraud.

Because it doesn't exist. The secretary of state Paul Pate has said as much. **Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin-** all Republican controlled State Houses have pushed voter ID. In Wisconsin they are in a court battle over this as we speak. North Carolina and Texas had voter id laws that were struck down as racially discriminatory and targeted Democrats. About 25 percent of Black voters nationally lack a government issued photo ID. Voting is already hard

for folks with disabilities. And the fact is minorities and folks who live in poverty vote majority Democratic. The same folks that will be affected by this bill. The idea of democracy is everyone gets a vote. If voter integrity is the issue why eliminate straight-party voting and change poll closure times to 8 p.m. Why reduce early voting in primary and general elections from 40 days to 29 days. The Democratic party is standing up for the disenfranchised voters. The Republican party seems to be looking to create disenfranchised voters. Coupled with the attacks on working lowans, the assault on our education, talk of attacks on retirement and women's reproductive rights while giving away billions through tax loopholes and credits for the wealthiest lowans and corporations voter disenfranchisement should not be a surprise. How else could you get re-elected. So give us some evidence. Lets see the truth if there is any to see. I think lowans aren't fooled by the claim that we had millions of votes cast fraudulently. So I urge you not to vote for HF516. We all know what this is about. Keeping in power even if it means disenfranchising voters.

The League of Women Voters is opposed to any voter ID requirements, for many of the reasons you have already heard. I would like to take my time to clear up some misconceptions.

The first misconception is that we somehow need voter ID cards to implement electronic poll books.

60 counties in Iowa, including my home county of Story, currently use Precinct Atlas. We do not need to ask voters who have already registered for identification, as the County Auditor has already verified their identities. And all of this information is easily located in the electronic pollbook.

The second misconception is that provisional ballots would be a simple solution for an eligible voter who does not have the voter ID card required in this bill.

Currently someone who is registering at the polls on Election Day but cannot provide proof of identity and residence must vote a provisional ballot. It is a complicated process but necessary for those persons whose identities have not already been verified through the registration process.

But relying on provisional ballots for a voter who took the time to register before the deadline but does not have a voter ID card, or has forgotten to bring it to the polls, creates unnecessary barriers.

REGARDING HOUSE FILE 516

Linda Murken, League of Women Voters of Iowa

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First, a voter who votes a provisional ballot must appear at the County Auditor's Office by noon on the Thursday of the week of the election to prove her or his identity. An employer is not required to grant time off, paid or unpaid, for this purpose. This is an unfair burden, particularly for low-wage workers.

Second, finding transportation can also be a burden. Many voters (in Story County, the vast majority) do not live in the county seat. Some eligible voters will not be able to find transportation to get to the Auditor's office during this short window.

When informed of this requirement at the polls, some voters may just not vote. Not because they are lazy or don't value the voting privilege, but because the hurdles this bill would place in front of them are too many or too high.

Flooding the system with many more provisional voters on Election Day will also lengthen lines and increase voter frustration. In busy elections, it will also give Auditors the impossible task of processing all of the ballots within the required deadlines.

The third misconception is that it will be easy for all eligible voters to obtain the ID card.

A speaker commented last week on the difficulties elderly housebound voters could have in obtaining the voter ID. An example is my mother who doesn't have a drivers'

license. At 90, she is cognitively able to vote but has trouble walking and suffers from conditions that make it difficult for her to go out in public. Would she, a person who has voted in Iowa since 1948, have to go to a Drivers License station to wait in discomfort and possible embarrassment to be issued a voter ID card? What purpose does this serve?

The fourth misconception is that, by requiring that eligible voters obtain photo ID cards, we will improve Iowa's voting system and will not keep eligible voters from voting.

Researchers who have studied state election systems rank Iowa's system at or near the top. There is no convincing evidence that voter ID laws improve an election system's integrity. But there is evidence that the turnout of minority voters decreases in states after those states enact strict voter ID laws.

The case has been made tonight that the proposed voter ID law is unnecessary and will disenfranchise Iowans - not a majority of Iowans, but many. Iowa has prided itself on protecting the rights of all of our citizens. As our state motto says, "Our liberties we prize and our rights we will maintain." But if one eligible voter is not able to vote because of an unnecessary requirement placed on their right, we have forfeited the right to that pride.

This bill will also cost the state money that, when it has come to funding other worthy programs, we have been told we don't have.

There are other requirements in this bill that sound good but are problematic and do not increase election integrity – so-called signature verification, hand counting all absentee ballots, doing away with the option for voters to vote a straight party ticket.

My final question: Iowa's County Auditors are opposed to this bill, so why is the Legislature even considering it? Auditors are concerned about election integrity; I think the Legislators supporting this bill are concerned about something else.

This bill is not in the best interests of Iowans and you should not pass it.