



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS**

**M I C H I G A N**

**EDUCATING AND ADVOCATING FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT**

**Testimony of Sue Smith, President, League of Women Voters of Michigan**

**Before the Michigan House  
Redistricting and Elections Committee  
April 17, 2012**

Good morning. My name is Sue Smith and I am the President of the League of Women Voters of Michigan. I would like to take this opportunity to express our opposition to three bills before you today, SB 751 (S-1), SB 754 (S-2), and SB 803 (S-1). These measures do not strengthen election integrity but instead add unnecessary requirements that create barriers to voting.

SB 751 and SB 754 impose additional photo ID requirements for registering to vote and voting absentee in-person. Michigan already has voter identification methods that work very well and that meet federal standards. There is no evidence of voter impersonation fraud and therefore no need for greater scrutiny of voters' identity. These requirements are not necessary and will make it more difficult for some people to vote.

SB 803 is also unnecessary because Michigan's voter registration form already requires the applicant to affirm his or her citizenship and swear to it by affidavit. Adding this information to the ballot application is redundant.

SB 754 would also require organizations that help people register to vote, such as the League, to be trained and certified by the State. This is an overreaching solution to an isolated problem, caused primarily by organizations that pay people to collect registrations. The bill is considered, "one of the most restrictive, mandatory training requirements in the country," according to the Brennan Center for Justice, a national public policy and law institute.

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Most of the groups that do this work rely upon volunteers, who are performing a civic service. There are no assurances that the required training will be offered throughout the state, at the frequency needed by groups that rely upon volunteers, and at convenient times and locations. We are also concerned about the timelines for transmitting completed voter registrations, which could lead to agencies having to track when registration forms are completed.

The training and certification requirements will make it more difficult to hold registration drives and reduce opportunities for citizens to register at convenient locations such as schools, libraries, community centers, and churches. In Florida, which passed a similar law, there have been 81,471 fewer voter registrations this year, compared to the same time period in 2008.

Recently, I received a request for League volunteers to register voters at a community event that was to take place in one week. I agreed to the invitation without hesitation. If SB 754 were in effect, I would not have been able to make that commitment. I would have to find out if certified, trained volunteers were available to staff the registration table or if they could be trained in time. I expect that many such opportunities will be missed if SB 754 passes.

The League has been registering voters for 90 years. It doesn't require specialized training by the Secretary of State to be able to provide a convenient opportunity for people to register.

The League of Women Voters believes that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed. We support election laws that improve the integrity of our elections. Requiring voters to show photo ID and regulating groups that register voters are not necessary to assure election integrity and will create barriers to voting. We urge you to vote against these bills.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.