

Testimony to Interim Judicial Committee

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Last year, I had the opportunity to attend the National Conference of State Legislators along with several ND legislators and Beth Innes from Williams County. We gave a brief update of the election process in North Dakota and ended that presentation with the comment that we are the only state in the union with no voter registration. During the remainder of the conference, Beth and I were questioned about how it works to have no voter registration and how other states could go about changing that requirement.

We heard many concerns and proposed changes throughout the conference and earlier this year, I received a survey about voter registration. Some concerns raised are the following:

1 – If a voter registers by mail:

Do they register without proof of citizenship, identity or proof of address?

Do they provide documents showing their address?

Should a notarized statement of address, identity and citizenship be required?

Should a copy of government issued proof of identity be required?

2 – In person registration:

Will they register at the office of the county election official?

Can they register at a satellite location in the community?

Do they register through the political parties?

Will registration be at the Department of Motor Vehicles?

What other government offices will handle voter registration?

3 –Registration on Election Day:

Will same day registration be permitted?

Will they register at the office of the county election official?

Will they register at the local precinct?

Will they register at a satellite office?

Will they be able to register online?

National voter registration required all offices offering public assistance programs to assist applicants in becoming registered voters if the applicant so chooses.

As you can see, there are many questions and a lot of unknown costs to voter registration.

Previous testimonies outlined our system in North Dakota with DOT providing data to the Central Voter File where we get the information to create our poll books, whether paper or electronic. An individual can go on-line or call in an address change any time prior to an election, but there is no way to confirm the address, or that the individual lived at that address 30 days before Election Day.

In order to vote in North Dakota, an individual must be a US citizen, at least 18 years of age, a resident of North Dakota and have lived in their precinct for at least 30 days prior to Election Day. Currently a voter must provide one of the following forms of identification: A valid ND driver's license, a non-driver's identification card, a Tribal Government issued identification card or a long-term card certification provided by a ND facility. On the back of all driver licenses, it states, "Notify Driver License Division within 10 days of change of name and/or address." If the name or the address on an ID is incorrect, is it really valid?

If you want to open an account at a bank, you must have a valid ID. If you want to get on a plane, you must have an ID. Over the past years, we've seen many options for voters to circumvent the ID requirements. These included affidavits, poll worker vouchers, bringing a utility bill and student certificates to name a few. Now, we are permitting people to simply go on line to update their ID at any time before an election. This puts an additional burden on the poll workers if the correct information is not in the poll book.

Voting is a privilege and with privileges, come responsibilities. Voter registration is not necessary if we can define and enforce the issue of residency and required identification.