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**Capitol View**

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**Convince Me Why We Need Voter ID in Nebraska**

It appears that Nebraska voters will decide at the November election if they want to require voter identification cards for elections. Signatures collected by Citizens for Voter ID are being verified before the matter is placed on the November ballot.

Voter ID cards are the love child of conservative Republicans although I have yet to see the need. Nebraska is one of 18 states without any form of voter identification laws. Where’s the voter fraud in Nebraska?   
 The American Civil Liberties Union says that in-person fraud is vanishingly rare. A recent study found that, since 2000, there were only 31 credible allegations of voter impersonation – the only type of fraud that photo IDs could prevent – during a period in which over 1 billion ballots were cast.

The object of the pending ballot measure is to amend the Nebraska Constitution to require that, before casting a ballot in any election, a qualified voter shall present valid photographic identification in a manner specified by the Legislature to ensure the preservation of an individual's rights under the United States Constitution.

Citizens for Voter ID is sponsoring the measure. Sen. Julie Slama, former Republican National Committeewoman and former state senator Lydia Brasch, and former Douglas County Republican Chairwoman Nancy McCabe formed the Political Action Committee that secured the more than 122, 274 signatures necessary.

Marlene Ricketts, the billionaire co-owner of the Chicago Cubs and wife of former Ameritrade chairman John Ricketts and the mother of Republican Governor Pete Ricketts, donated $376,000 to Citizens for Voter ID on July 13, 2021. I’ve said this before, there’s nothing

**For Release Wednesday, August 10, 2022 – Page 2**

illegal about that, but it does cause one to ponder. The only other large contribution was $1,000 from former Congressman Hal Daub.

The governor said, "showing ID when they go to vote, it’s one of the ways we can strengthen the integrity of our elections. It’s a great opportunity for the second house, the people of Nebraska, to be able to weigh in where the Legislature has not been able to get it passed.” Nebraska’s Legislature rejected seven times a measure that would have forced voters to show a government-issued identification at the polls.

Well, he does understand that. When the Legislature overrode his veto of a bill abolishing the death penalty, Ricketts was the major contributor to a ballot initiative to reinstate the death penalty. Did the people of “the second house” weigh in? Or was that just another example of money talks?

A spokesman for Civic Nebraska, one of the groups opposing the measure, said "The only thing we are certain these measures would do is to make it harder for eligible Nebraskans -- especially young, low-income, rural, black and brown, and senior Nebraskans -- to freely and fairly cast a ballot.’

The ACLU says millions of Americans lack government-Issued IDs. About 7% of U.S. citizens – or more than 16 million Americans – cannot confirm that they have a government-issued photo ID. Further, they contend that obtaining ID costs money such as for birth certificates and travel to official places to secure the documents.

They claim a 2014 Government Accounting Office study found that strict photo ID laws reduce turnout by 2-3 percentage points, which can translate into tens of thousands of votes lost in a single state.  
 Nebraska joins California, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Vermont, West Virginia, Wyoming, and Washington, D.C., as not having voter ID laws.

**For Release Wednesday, August 10, 2022 – Page 3**

Supporters claim that requiring voter ID stops voting fraud, it’s easy to implement and that it won’t decrease minority voter turnout. They also say: it’s a reliable method of identification; it’s proof that the voter is legally registered to vote; the ID can be marked after voting to prevent voting multiple times; can be issued with materials to educate voters as part of a campaign; is reliable identification for a voter without a fixed address.   
 Here's my favorite, some proponents say it might convey a sense of pride in some individuals symbolizing their legal ability to vote. Heck, I’d be prouder to vote if we had less party politics, fewer negative commercials and mailings, and more trustworthy candidates. I’m tired of trying to pick the lesser of two evils.

The debate concerning voter identification has been going on for many years, since the right claims it is necessary to safeguard against voting fraud while the left claims it is disenfranchising to minorities. But I think it’s important to remember that we need photo IDs for everything from cashing a check to filling a prescription. If you check into a hotel, a hospital or board an airliner, you must show a photo ID.

So, what’s the big deal? I’m not convinced either way yet.

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