



The Peculiar Necessity (or lack thereof) of the Photo ID

By: Jeffrey W. Ferguson

I recently went to the Annapolis Capital building to observe the beginning of the special session for the Maryland House of Delegates. In order to enter, I had to go through a security station. You know the drill - place briefcase on the conveyor belt, empty pockets of valuables and put cell phone and computer on the belt. And, oh yeah, show a photo ID. Over the past several years you get conditioned to having to produce a photo ID. Every time you go to the doctor's office you have to show a photo ID. To even charge a bag of grass seed at Home Depot you have to show a photo ID.

The photo ID part upon entering the state house really astounded me though because last November I had been a poll watcher on Election Day. No one was required to show any kind of photo identification. People gave their name, address and were able to vote. The only way that you might be able to identify someone who was voting fraudulently was if you recognized them as having already been there to vote or if you knew that they were providing a forged name and address.

I may be thinking incorrectly, but it seems to me that the most important function/right any citizen has is to be able to vote for their representatives and proposed legislation. In order to do so in Maryland one need not prove who you are but merely claim to be whom you say you are. Opportunities for mischief and deception abound. But, if you wish to go to the gallery and observe the legislature in action, you have to prove who you are by showing a photo ID. Watching and listening to the legislators in action hardly rises to

the top of the list of important or sacred activities that need to be screened for deviant behavior. I understand that there are kooks and nuts out in our society, but if this is so important why isn't voting equally important? Perhaps the inferential message is that it is OK to let the uninformed and perhaps ineligible vote but not view how our officials behave as they dictate laws and regulations for the residents of the state.

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