

## Vol. II - The Peculiar Necessity (or lack thereof) of the Photo ID

By: Jeffrey W. Ferguson

My recent comments regarding the lack of a requirement for a photo ID in order to vote generated a lot of feedback. It ranged from pessimism ("it won't change as long as the Dems run this state") to outrage ("... you should have an ID; otherwise, the corruption and fraud will continue to increase..aka.ACORN.") to a legal view ("The lack of requirement of ID comes from the idea that a payment for the ID would be some kind of poll tax."). One person said that she, like me, went to the statehouse to watch the Special Session and wondered why the practice is backwards, especially when there is no log or record to show who entered the statehouse. Another person stated that everyone in Maryland is required to have a photo ID and you can get one if you go the MVA and it looks just like a driver's license.

The examples most frequently cited against the photo ID requirement are that it discriminates against the poor, the elderly and students. Each can be addressed:

- As pointed out above both seniors and those who don't drive can get a photo ID from this state, and in most states, at the license bureau. We dealt with this a number of years ago for my mother-in-law. The equipment used to generate the photo ID's today is small and easily portable. It could easily be taken to senior centers around the state to provide each senior an opportunity to have a photo ID. It could also be taken to nursing homes, retirement centers and assisted living centers.
- Similar approaches could be done for others in the communities who don't drive by going to local public schools. If we could use elementary schools in the 1950's to distribute polio vaccines to the public, why can't the same thinking be done for voter registration.
- Students, both full and part-time, have a photo ID taken at their colleges and universities so that they can enter events and pay for items at campus stores. They

also have the ability to vote absentee if they are away from home while attending school.

- Another suggestion made by a responder is to have a photo ID done when registering to vote. We certainly could figure out a way to deal with those who either lost or didn't bring their photo ID when they come to vote on Election Day.

The Brennan Center for Justice in New York City recently produced a study that stated as many as five million voters nationwide could have more difficulty voting if a photo ID were mandated across the country. I find that hard to believe. The above actions could address this. I also would question how The Brennan Center came up their estimated number. It reeks of being a PFA number (Plucked From Air).

The answer is this could be solved if political forces wanted to solve the photo ID issue. The emotional rhetoric about this being a discriminatory approach to voting merely masks the opportunities for voter fraud.

A friend sent me this list off of the internet of everyday occurrences where we must show a photo ID:

1. When/if pulled-over by the police.
2. Making purchases on a department store credit card or using a debit card.
3. When showing up for a doctor's appointment.
4. When completing a credit card application.
5. When applying for or renewing a passport.
6. When applying for any kind of insurance.
7. When completing a college application.
8. When ordering or picking up prescription drugs.
9. When checking into a hotel.
10. When collecting a boarding pass or entering a gate at an airport.

We know from recent experience, you could add another - visiting the statehouse to view a legislative session.

Yet, we wouldn't dare ask for a photo ID for the most important act that any citizen can exercise?

*Jeffrey W. Ferguson, Ph.D. is Executive Vice-President of the Harbour League.*