

Statement for the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee
SF 1577 Proposed Constitutional Amendment on Voting Requirements
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Good afternoon. My name is Sherri Knuth. I am the Public Policy Coordinator for League of Women Voters Minnesota.

League of Women Voters is present in every state in the United States, and the Minnesota League hears from other state Leagues about shared issues. We have heard about the problems citizens are encountering in obtaining voter photo-IDs after some other states have enacted photo ID requirements. You may have heard some of these stories in the media as well. I would like to share examples of real people who have been voting for 40 to 60 years, and now face barriers—perhaps insurmountable—because of the photo ID requirement.

California native Delores Freelon now lives in South Carolina where a new voter photo-ID law was passed. Freelon's mother didn't provide a first name on her birth certificate when Freelon was born and missed a deadline to add that to the birth certificate. Living on disability checks, Freelon, age 59, said that she can't afford to spend more than \$700 to petition a court to change her name and that the process could take more than one year. So Freelon does not have appropriate documents to obtain a photo ID to exercise her right to vote.

Closer to home, in the state of Wisconsin, two elderly women face barriers in obtaining voter IDs. Florence Hessing is a 96 year old disabled woman living in Bayfield, Wisconsin. Her driver's license expired a few years ago. To obtain the state's new voter ID, Hessing needs a copy of her birth certificate. She was born in Iowa, but when she wrote to the state to obtain a copy of her birth certificate, they informed her that they had no official record. Without a birth certificate, Hessing cannot obtain a photo ID to vote.

Ruthelle Frank, an 84-year-old woman who lives in Brokaw, Wisconsin, has never needed a birth certificate until now, when she needs one to get a state ID to vote. But the matter is

complicated: the attending physician at Frank's birth misspelled her maiden name on records that were prepared. To get a birth certificate with the correct information, she will have to petition a court to amend the document -- a process that could take weeks and cost \$200 or more.

Proponents of photo ID sometimes rely on the Supreme Court decision upholding Indiana's photo ID law, saying that the court could find no one who was denied the right to vote because of that law. What these proponents fail to mention is the fact that the Indiana law was challenged “on its face,” meaning that no election had taken place since the law had been passed and the court did not and could not address evidence of real voters encountering problems. So the Indiana case has nothing to do with how this requirement would work in practice. Rather, these stories that I have shared today show that a photo ID requirement is far from the simple, common sense measure that proponents have been saying and that we should learn from other states' experiences.

Thank you.