

Testimony of Eva Steele, Arizona Advocacy Network House Committee on Administration

My name is Eva Steele. I am 57 years old and I live at Desert Palms Assisted Living Center in Mesa Arizona. I grew up in a small town called Kirksville, Missouri, about 180 miles from Kansas City. My family lived there for generations. We are a patriotic family and we have always had a sense of civic duty. My grandfather was the town constable, a tradition begun by his father before him. My daughter was in law enforcement for eight years. And my son is now fighting in Iraq; fighting to make sure that the Iraqi people can have their voices heard by voting in democratic elections. He is in his 20th year in the military and I am very proud of him.

I first registered to vote when I graduated from High School and I am pleased to say that I voted in nearly every election after that. Each election day I would get a call from my mother asking me if I had voted yet. Then my grandmother would call making sure I knew when the polls closed. You see, in our family we considered it our patriotic duty to participate in our democracy. We all vote and we always have. It was and is as important to us as our family tradition of putting up the flag and placing flowers on graves each and every Memorial Day.

I worked hard raising my four children. I have been a single mom, and I am proud to have instilled in my children the same values of

honesty, integrity, civic responsibility and love of our country that I learned growing up in a small town in the Midwest.

Like so many others I moved to Arizona to live out my retirement years and I have lived here for seven months. I am a woman of very limited means. In fact, I have been disabled for seven years and my only income is disability. I am no longer able to drive. I have physical disabilities that make it very difficult for me to take public transportation. I don't have a driver's license. I have never been outside of the United States and I have never owned a passport. And I don't have a birth certificate.

I wanted to register to vote here, but I was shocked to learn that the new proof-of-citizenship requirements passed with the Arizona Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act or Prop 200 have made it impossible for me to do so. I cannot tell you how this pains me. Life is hard enough for disabled people like me without the added insult of being excluded from participating in our democracy. I do not have the economic means to pay the fees associated with obtaining the documents necessary to prove citizenship.

If somehow, I were to be able to register, Prop 200's proof of identity requirements would prohibit me from voting at the polls because I do not have any of the documents required to prove my identity. I live in an assisted living center and I do not have utility bills or property tax statements. I do not drive so I don't have a car insurance card or a vehicle registration card. Whether unintentional or not, those who

drafted this law could not have done a better job of ensuring that the voices of people like me and others in similar circumstances would be effectively silenced. It feels as though I am being punished for having the misfortune of being disabled with a low income.

I am not an illegal immigrant. It is clear to me that the barriers to voting imposed by Prop 200 are doing nothing to stem the tide of illegal immigration. But they are certainly keeping law-abiding citizens like me from voting. While my son fights for the right of Iraqi citizens to vote, his own mother is prohibited from voting here in the only country she has ever known. That, to me, is un-American. We must eliminate these barriers to voting here in Arizona. And I ask that you oppose any efforts to enact similar barriers to voting at the national level. Thank you very much.

The Arizona Advocacy Network promotes social, economic, racial and environmental justice by connecting and building power among activists and leaders in those fields, and by leading efforts for electoral justice and increased civic participation. The Advocacy Network promotes electoral justice and full civic participation by protecting and improving citizen access to voting by working to diminish limitations and restrictions on registration and voting; defending and promoting Clean Elections for all levels of elective office in Arizona; and protecting citizens' rights to enact legislation through initiative and referendum.