



The Honorable Edward G. Rendell  
Governor of Pennsylvania  
225 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

February 16, 2005

Dear Governor Rendell,

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law would like to express our strong objection to House Bill 1318 and we encourage you to veto this regressive bill. The Lawyers' Committee and other civil rights groups have long opposed photo identification measures like those in HB 1318 because of the dramatically disproportionate impact they have on seniors, minorities and low-income voters.

The Lawyers' Committee is committed to restoring confidence and integrity to our electoral system. An election with integrity is one that includes ALL eligible voters and ONLY eligible voters. House Bill 1318 undermines this principle by potentially denying thousands of Pennsylvanians their right to vote through burdensome photo identification requirements.

Photo identification requirements disenfranchise up to 12% of eligible voters. Proponents of HB 1318 claim that these identification requirements will prevent fraud in elections, but there is no evidence that the type of fraud solved by stricter voter identification –individual voters who misrepresent their identity at the polls – is anything but an anomaly. A recent study conducted by the League of Women Voters of Ohio and COHHIO found that in over 9 million votes cast in the 2002 and 2004 general elections, there were only 4 proven cases of voter fraud in the entire state. There is no question that election misconduct exists, including improper purges of eligible voters, distributing false information about when and where to vote, stuffing of ballot boxes, and tampering with registration forms. Pennsylvania's legislators should focus on fixing these problems instead of denying eligible citizens the right to vote.

The Lawyers' Committee, along with many national and local partners, has been fighting similar legislation in states like Ohio and Georgia. In 2004, the Georgia Legislature passed a bill that requires all voters to show photo identification at the polls. The ACLU, along with the Lawyers' Committee, filed suit to prevent the bill from going into effect. The United States District Court in Georgia recently granted our preliminary injunction, holding that the identification provision is likely a constitutionally prohibited poll tax and violates the fundamental rights of Georgians to cast a ballot. A panel of the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals refused to stay the injunction and recently remanded the case to the district court, keeping the temporary injunction in place. As in Georgia, HB 1318 does not solve the problem of voter misconduct; the bill merely limits the right to vote for hundreds of thousands of eligible Pennsylvanians.

Your veto will send a strong message that Pennsylvania will not turn back the clock on voting rights. In fact, your veto will set an example for other states around the country fighting similar discriminatory identification measures. Pennsylvanians deserve real election reform to enhance our democracy by increasing political participation, improving the administration of our electoral system so that it is accessible and responsive to voters, and restoring confidence in the outcomes of our elections. Thank you for your leadership on these important issues.

Sincerely,

Barbara R. Arnwine  
Executive Director  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law