

The Honorable Vernon Elders, Chair
The Honorable Juanita Millender-McDonald, Ranking Member
Committee on House Administration
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

June 21, 2006

Dear Representative Ehlers and Representative Millender-McDonald,

On behalf of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, I write in opposition to Representative Henry Hyde's so-called "Federal Election Integrity Act of 2006," because it will sacrifice the most fundamental rights guaranteed to all American citizens by our constitution – the right to vote. Contrary to its title, the bill will undermine the integrity of our electoral process by making federal elections less responsive to the will of eligible American voters. At a time when our brave men and women are sacrificing their lives to ensure that Iraqis can experience the national pride of a fair democratic process, patriotic responsibility demands that we insist on nothing less for our own citizens. H.R. 4844 needlessly requires proof of citizenship when eligible voters register to vote and photo identification when citizens cast a ballot. These may seem like innocuous provisions, but in reality they will create an unprecedented regime of disenfranchisement aimed at our nation's traditionally disenfranchised voters.

For over forty years, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law has fought the poisonous specter of discrimination through litigation, advocacy, and organizing. Our foundation rests on ensuring that all eligible voters have the opportunity to cast a meaningful ballot. Our legacy is why we are committed to opposing unnecessary restrictions that disenfranchise voters, such as Congressman Hyde's bill. In Georgia and Arizona, the Lawyers' Committee is counsel for eligible citizens who will be disenfranchised by similar state initiated provisions.

Representative Hyde's bill is undemocratic, unfair, and unconstitutional because it:

- Places an unconstitutional burden on the fundamental right of eligible citizens to participate equally in the democratic process;
- Constitutes a poll tax;
- Unfairly removes eligible voters from the electoral system, primarily from traditionally disenfranchised communities;
- Is impossible for states to administer; and
- Attempts to address a problem that does not exist.

