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New voter ID law isn't necessary

The right to vote, along with full and fair representation, is the most basic of political rights. Requiring voters to show photo ID and regulating groups that register voters are not necessary to assure election integrity and will create barriers to voting (editorial: "Voting reforms will help assure integrity," March 12).

Michigan already has voter identification methods that work very well and that meet federal standards. A variety of documents can serve as proof of identity including, but not limited to, photo ID. There is no evidence of voter impersonation fraud in Michigan elections, and therefore no need for greater scrutiny of voters' identity. The clerks that run our elections have attested to this fact.

Many eligible voters don't have the kind of identification required and will have difficulty getting it. The time and expense of obtaining photo ID can be prohibitive and may include not only the cost of the ID but also lost work time and fees to obtain supporting documents, such as a birth certificate.

National studies show that an estimated 10 percent of voting-age citizens lack government-issued photo ID. People age 65 or over will be especially burdened by the requirement, as nearly one in five lacks photo ID.

Opportunities for citizens to register to vote will also be reduced if the pending legislation passes. Mandatory training and certification requirements for groups that register voters, such as ours, will make it more difficult to hold registration drives. There are no assurances that the training to be provided by the Secretary of State will be offered throughout the state at times and locations that are convenient for civic organizations and their volunteers.

Again, there is no evidence that these regulations are needed or will improve our elections. The League of Women Voters has been registering voters for 90 years. It doesn't require specialized training. It simply provides an opportunity for people to register at a convenient location, such as their school, church, library, or community center. We should encourage people to vote by making voting more convenient and accessible, not more difficult.

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