

Voter suppression is a real issue in 2012

Written by Fred Easter
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It is becoming clear that if you are not one of the richest one percent of Americans and you voted for Pres. Barack Obama in 2008, you are in jeopardy of losing your right to vote later this year.

In every state under Republican control – thank God for Mark Dayton – laws are being enacted aimed at suppressing the number of voters who figure to support the President in 2012.

Older African-Americans voted in record numbers in 2008. Not surprisingly, we voted overwhelmingly for Barack Obama. We were doing something most of us never expected to do in our lifetimes. Now, in more than 20 states, ballot measures are proceeding through, or have passed state legislatures that would require voters to present government issued identifications in order to register and vote. Elders, who perhaps no longer drive; poorer folk, who see no reason to part with the dollars for a passport, will all have some hard choices to make. They will also have to spend considerable time and energy making the necessary arrangements. In 2012, I will cast my fourteenth vote for the office of president. No change in the law should affect my rights at the polls.

Republicans say these identification measures are necessary to stop voter fraud. Yeah, right! In the past 10 years 311 incidents of voter fraud have come to light. In that time nearly 593 million votes have been cast. You do the math. More than 20 state legislatures frittering away the voters' time and money solving problems that do not exist, yet real problems go unattended.

This Republican tactic is the more frightening when paired with the party's attacks on women, gays, unions and Latinos. It suggests overconfidence in the effect of the suppression efforts. It also suggests to me that Republicans expect African-Americans and poorer folk to be a bit lazy about voting this time.

It is a shame that Republicans took out ACORN. A massive, national voter registration drive is needed. Churches need to set up efforts to see to the voter viability of all their congregants. College and university government courses need to task students to research new laws in their home states and develop their plans for absentee voting. Social service agencies should see that their clients are all registered to vote. These are the folk that have the most to lose if Obama is denied a second term. Social Security, Medicare, health insurance, Planned Parenthood and unemployment benefits all figure to take a hit if Democrats do not regain control of the House of Representatives and hold onto the Senate and White House.

Education in civics and voter registration is not partisan activity, which is barred from non-profits. Rather, it is good citizenship. It is what our Founding Fathers had in mind when they wrote of a government, "Of the people, by the people and for the people."

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Remember, we are the people, not the corporations.