

Voter restriction amendment tragically flawed

Written by Mike Freeman, Hennepin County Attorney
Monday, 15 October 2012 09:55

In my career as a politician, I've worked hard to reach out to all people in Minnesota, regardless of where they live or where they came from. I have talked to people in every corner of this great state and I wanted everyone to take part in electing good people to our local, state and national governments.

Most importantly, I wanted every eligible voter to cast a ballot. I knew that it was my responsibility, as the candidate, to win those votes. I enjoyed that challenge, even when I lost. But I would never do anything to stop people from voting.

Unfortunately, not everyone shares that view of elections. The voter restriction constitutional amendment on the November ballot would make it difficult for many people to vote. It would require everyone to show a valid state-issued photo ID with a current address, something never required before. No exceptions.

This amendment, as written, would make it difficult, if not impossible, for our service men and women fighting overseas to vote in Minnesota elections. The same is true of senior citizens, our newest citizens and young people. It would endanger same day registration.

It also will cost the state and local governments at least \$50 million to implement, at a time when governments do not have a dollar to spare. That means property taxes would have to be raised or services cut such as fixing our roads, maintaining our parks or enforcing our laws to pay for this unfunded mandate.

There is no reason to add this additional burden on our taxpaying citizens. There is no voting problem for this amendment to fix. As the Hennepin County Attorney, I am required by law to investigate any voting irregularities. I can report that we have clean elections in Hennepin County and, in talking with my fellow county attorneys, I know that we have clean elections throughout Minnesota.

Election after election, we lead the nation in voter turnout. If you have ever voted, you know how wonderful the polling place is: neighbors chatting with neighbors as they wait in line, signing your name to obtain your ballot and then claiming your "I voted" sticker. The 2008 and 2010 elections were very closely scrutinized and there were very, very few problems. Most of the problems were human error. None would be fixed by this voter restriction amendment.

Quite frankly, the people behind this constitutional amendment, particularly those at Minnesota Majority, have made it clear that there are some types of people they just don't like. One of their other issues, according to their website, is cracking down on "illegal aliens coming to our country who have no interest in becoming part of America. They are opportunists seeking the spoils of our success."

In fact, back in February when the voter restriction amendment was debated in the Minnesota Legislature, Rep. Rena Moran of St. Paul held a news conference to denounce a racially inflammatory image on a website run by Minnesota Majority. It showed an image of an African-American male dressed in a black-and-white-striped prison suit, and a person dressed in a blue mariachi costume, alongside other outlandish Halloween characters including a

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white-sheeted ghost, as part of the push for requiring photo ID to vote.

Moran said she was sickened by the image and said the voter restriction amendment was "a 21st Century Jim Crow law," and the images were "nothing more than scare tactics used to make sure people of color are further marginalized from public life."

This is a tragically flawed amendment that would have great costs to taxpayers and make it harder for Minnesotans to cast their vote. And it is championed by people whose motives cannot be trusted. That's why I'm working to defeat this voter restriction amendment and I hope you will join me in voting no.