

Students and faculty unite against voter restriction

Written by

Monday, 29 October 2012 15:20

Students representing public universities, private colleges and community colleges from around Minnesota, along with select college faculty and Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak, gathered Tuesday in front of Coffman Memorial Union to hold a news conference and rally against the voter restriction amendment. Speakers included student representatives from Winona State University, the University Minnesota-Morris, the University of St. Thomas and several from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus.

"Adding a photo ID requirement to Minnesota's state constitution will make it unnecessarily harder for students and young voters to exercise their right to vote," said Alexandra Griffin, President of the Winona State University Student Association. "This amendment may sound like common sense but it has serious consequences and costs for students and young voters across our state."

Should the amendment pass, students will be one of the most impacted constituencies in the state due to their frequency in changing residences on- and off-campus as well as address transitions from a parents' residence at home to a new college address. As Election Day registration and vouching will both be eliminated under the restrictive new law, many students would be forced to vote provisionally, first casting their ballot and then being required to return after Election Day to show their government-issued ID.

Taylor Williams, President of the University of Minnesota Twin Cities Student Association, talked about the considerable costs to students, state and local taxpayers if the amendment passes. "Instead of investing in education and working to lower tuition, Minnesota will instead have to spend \$50 million or more to implement this complicated new elections system. That's taking away money from real needs at universities and colleges across our state."

Mayor R. T. Rybak was also on hand and expressed considerable concern about the impact students would feel if the amendment passed. "Students may be used to showing their student IDs or other forms of photo ID for all sorts of things in their daily life. The problem is, this amendment isn't so simple and student IDs, especially those at private colleges, wouldn't be allowed. We need to get out and vote against this harmful amendment before it's too late."

Evan Vogel, from the University of Minnesota—Morris campus, who is Vice-Chair of the University of Minnesota Student Senate and an Executive Committee member of the Morris Campus Student Association talked about how the amendment would set up a series of burdens for student voters, including new two-tiered system of provisional balloting and requiring students to drive long distances in order to vote from a home address in another part of the state if they lacked an updated address on the photo ID they carry at school. "I'm proud to oppose this amendment, because Minnesota leads the nation in voter participation."

University of St. Thomas junior, Alex Kopel, said she is worried that students at private colleges like St. Thomas would have additional hurdles to jump through since their IDs aren't government-issued. "Private college students would have a tough time if this amendment passes because our student IDs wouldn't qualify."

Speaking on behalf of student organizing efforts to defeat the voter restriction amendment was

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Emma Wright, also a University of Minnesota student and Board Chair of the Minnesota Public Interest Research Group (MPIRG). Wright emphasized that "the more students learn about this restrictive amendment, the more they dislike it and are voting NO." MPIRG has spent months organizing and educating students across the state to vote against the amendment and has been a key partner in the Our Vote Our Future coalition.

University of Minnesota Chemistry professor Chris Cramer spoke on behalf of University faculty saying universities have a responsibility to encourage voting, promoting it as a civic duty of student life. "Facilitating voting, not restricting it, is fundamental to democracy."

Also on Tuesday, the Our Vote Our Future campaign released its fourth television ad, entitled "Alex." The :30 ad features Anoka native Alex Erickson, an Operation Iraqi Freedom combat veteran who served as an Army Cavalry Scout in during Operation Iraqi Freedom. In the ad, Erickson encourages Minnesota voters to Vote No and send the amendment back to the Legislature:

When you put it all on the line defending freedom, nobody should take a basic freedom away from you.

The Voter Restriction Amendment might seem like a good idea, but when the Legislature put it on the ballot, they screwed it up.

To them, military IDs aren't valid IDs, which means this amendment takes away a basic freedom from people who gave a whole lot.

*Let's send this back, and make them fix it.
Vote no.*

View "Alex,"

"display: block; margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;" type="application/x-shockwave-flash">