

Representative Rena Moran works to defeat voter ID

Written by Harry Colbert, Jr.
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With Election Day right around the corner, State Rep. Rena Moran (DFL, 65A) is doing her part to defeat the proposed voter ID amendment that appears on the Nov. 6 ballot.

Moran recently held a fundraiser with about 50 participants at Arnellia's, 1183 W. University Ave., St. Paul. Moran said all the funds raised are being put towards her efforts to defeat the state's proposed voter photo identification amendment. The proposed amendment was passed by the majority Republican legislature, and if adopted, would require all state voters to show a valid state-issued photo ID card in order to cast their ballots in any future elections.

The St. Paul legislator – and the only African American woman in the state legislature – said the proposed voter ID amendment would do more harm than good if passed.

“This is an unfunded mandate,” said Moran. “Based on studies, this thing could cost \$50 million. It will affect property taxes, police, fire – this is not a free law.”

Moran believes race is at issue when the bill was proposed by the far right wing of the state's Republican Party.

“This is nothing more than a 21st century Jim Crow law,” said Moran. “This is a clear case of people trying to silence the voices of people of color”

Though Moran feels the ballot question is rooted in suppressing the minority vote, the affects will go far beyond. She said the voter ID amendment would stifle voting for the elderly, military serving abroad, college students and more who do not currently possess a valid state ID. She also said the language that was presented to legislators is not the language on the official ballot.

“The language on the House floor was government issued ID, but the language on the ballot is state issued ID,” said Moran. “We don't yet know what a government ID is. Would it be a college

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ID, a military ID – maybe, maybe not?”

St. Paul city councilman, Melvin Carter III, said the proposed voter ID amendment is scary proposition for Minnesotans.

“This is the most dangerous, most damaging initiative in our state,” said Carter.

Carter, who was a student at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, Fla. during the infamous 2000 presidential election, said he knows what it is like to see people’s voting rights denied. He said a relative of his was told his name was not on the voting rolls and was denied the ability to vote, after standing in line for nearly 45 minutes.

“I’m thankful that when I came home to a state with such a good history of protecting voting rights that I’m only one of a few people to have seen something so painful,” said Carter. “I want to make sure that no Minnesotan has to go through an experience like that.”

Dianne Binns, 1st vice president of the St. Paul branch of the NAACP said the current ballot question reminds her of a time in her life when African Americans virtually could not vote.

“I know what it was like for my mother and grandmother in Arkansas who would have to save money just to pay a poll tax, and then wonder after they paid the tax if Mr. So-and-so would let them vote,” said Binns.

Binns said she could have easily been one of the disenfranchised by the proposed amendment had she not gone back to Arkansas to get a birth certificate. She said she was born at home with the assistance of a midwife and for years did not possess a birth certificate.

Moran said the funds raised at the event will go to pay workers to phone-bank and door-knock in opposition to the proposed amendment. She said she is paying workers \$10 an hour for their work.