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## Issues with voter ID law

There has been a storm of controversy generated by Pennsylvania's new voter ID law which was enacted in March of this year. Purportedly to prevent voter fraud, voters in Pennsylvania, starting with the election in November, will be required to present photo ID each and every time in order to vote. Although there is no proof that significant voter fraud was occurring, and similar laws in other states have been put on hold by the U.S. Justice Department, or struck down in the courts, Pennsylvania citizens who wish to vote should be prepared to show valid ID.

There is a list of acceptable identification forms, including any photo ID issued by the U.S. government or the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, including employees of same, a driver's license or non-driver's license (no more than 12 months after expiration), a valid U.S. passport, U.S. Military ID (not expired), ID from a PA public or private university, or photo ID issued by a PA care facility. Even those voting by absentee ballot must provide acceptable identification.

In a report from The Brennan Center for Justice ([www.brennancenter.org/content/section/category/voter\\_id](http://www.brennancenter.org/content/section/category/voter_id)), as many as 11 percent of eligible voters do not have government issued photo ID. This has been corroborated in many other studies. In addition, *18 percent* of voters over the age of 65 years do not have valid ID. Many older persons have given up driving, or never drove, and often lack the paperwork necessary in order to apply for photo ID. Seniors are going to experience the most difficulty with complying with the law change; many of them have voted consistently for many years. It is possible to obtain free acceptable photo ID in order to vote, but it requires a visit to a PennDOT center. Form DL-54A must be completed where the applicant will sign an Oath/Affirmation that he or she has no acceptable form of ID needed to vote. The applicant will need a Social Security card, AND an official birth certificate with the raised seal, or a certificate of U.S. citizenship or a certificate of naturalization, AND two proofs of residency, such as a lease agreement, mortgage documents, recent utility bill, W-2 form or tax records. Also, be prepared to wait in a long line. If someone wishes to renew an expired driver's license, it is possible to do so, but bring a check or money order since PennDOT centers do not accept cash or credit cards. Furthermore, the nearest PennDOT centers to the 19464 area code are Reading (18 miles), Frazer/Malvern (16 miles) and Norristown (17 miles). This could be challenging for someone without a driver's license.

Professor Lawrence Frolik from the University of Pittsburgh Law School wrote an interesting essay on this issue. To date, the legal challenges to this new law have failed. On August 15, 2012, Commonwealth Court Judge Robert Simpson decided that the law's burdens on registered voters did not amount to an unconstitutional interference with the right to vote. Tell that to the registered voters waiting in line at the PennDOT center to be turned away for failure to provide the required documentation. Professor Frolik also states, "There have only been 10 confirmed cases nationwide of voter impersonation since 2000. A photo ID law to bar voter impersonation is a solution in search of a problem." What is likely to happen is that many faithful voters will not vote, which is a problem in search of a solution.