



Steve Gunn: Is it better to protect the voter or the vote?

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By **Steve Gunn** | **The Muskegon Chronicle**

Democrats like to claim that voter verification laws being implemented throughout the nation are "designed to keep poor, elderly and minority voters from heading to the polls."

What they're really saying is that they want the poor, elderly and minorities to cast ballots, because they tend to support Democrats, but they don't think they're smart or wealthy enough to secure a state identification card.

What an incredible insult to those people.

It costs \$25 to obtain a driver's license or \$10 to obtain a state identification card in Michigan, and probably about the same in other states. The ID cards are free for people aged 65 and over.

There are very few people out there who can't save up that much money over a period of time, if voting is important enough to them.

Besides, it's apparently illegal not to carry a state-issued ID. I was stopped for speeding a few years ago, and was detained and threatened with jail because I accidentally left my driver's license at the bank. I had to convince the cop that I was who I said I was, and not an outlaw on the run.

If the law requires you to carry an ID anyway, why can't the law require you to show it before you vote?

But the Democrats are upset because many of their would-be voters lack proper identification.

The bottom line is this -- if they want to vote, they can. It's an individual decision whether or not to take the very minor, inexpensive steps necessary to secure legal

identification. If that's too much trouble for some people, perhaps they don't care who the president or governor is.

That's certainly their right.

In the meantime, officials in Michigan and every other state have an absolute responsibility to protect against voter fraud.

Voter fraud happens all over the nation. It has affected the outcomes of very important elections. And it doesn't have to be widespread to be wrong. One verified case of voter fraud should be enough to make photo identification necessary.

Unless, of course, your party cares more about winning than it does about the integrity of the voting process. Where do you stand on that, Democrats?

Perhaps a quick review of history will answer that question.

Older voters recall the extremely close 1960 presidential election, when it was alleged that dead people voting in Chicago put Sen. John F. Kennedy over the top in that state and sealed his victory over Vice President Richard Nixon.

A 2000 Washington Post story said, "In Chicago, where Kennedy won by more than 450,000 votes, local reporters uncovered so many stories of electoral shenanigans -- including voting by the dead -- that the Chicago Tribune concluded that 'the election of Nov. 8 was characterized by such gross and palpable fraud as to justify the conclusion that (Nixon) was deprived of victory.'"

Then there was the hotly contested 2008 U.S. Senate race in Minnesota.

The Democratic challenger, Al Franken, defeated incumbent Sen. Norm Coleman by a scant 312 votes. Months later a nonprofit group compared the list of people who voted in the state's two largest (and most Democratic) counties to a list of convicted felons living in those counties.

It was determined that 341 convicted felons voted in one county and 52 in the other. It's illegal for convicted felons to vote in Minnesota. Pretty much everyone agrees that most of them probably voted for Franken.

As U.S. News and World Reports put it, "It looks extremely likely that at least one member of the United States Senate may owe his seat ... not to his charisma or the persuasiveness of his message, but to voter fraud."

Here in Michigan, Republican Secretary of State Ruth Johnson is trying to prevent this sort of thing from happening.

According to one news report, Johnson wants to enhance the accuracy of qualified voter files, improve training for third party voter registration organizations, and require identification for people who register to vote in person.

The state already requires photo IDs to cast a ballot.

Johnson wants to make sure Michigan elections are fair and valid, like they're supposed to be. Officials in other states are making similar efforts. And the Democrats don't like that one bit.

"It's part of a larger, national effort in legislatures across the country to enact barriers to voting in the 2012 general election," said Melvin "Butch" Hollowell, general counsel for the Michigan NAACP. "It's very clear to us that this is an assault on voting rights as it pertains to the minority community."

Hollowell went on to say that roughly 622,000 Michigan residents lack photo IDs, and most of them are persons of color.

It would be one thing if there were legal barriers keeping minorities from securing ID cards. But there aren't. Anybody who has \$10 and the patience to stand in line at an overcrowded Secretary of State's office can get an ID, and then they are free to vote.

If Hollowell and his friends really want to attack this problem, they should start a campaign to remind those people to secure IDs before the November election. That way they will be able to exercise their right to vote, and the integrity of our election totals will be protected.

After all, it's pretty important that the person with the most legitimate votes wins every election.

Right, Democrats?

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