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## Voter reforms are far from onerous

**ID requirements and registration training are common sense measures that will protect the integrity of elections**

*Security guards had to intervene last week when shouting protestors drowned out lawmakers discussing a package of bills calling for a number of election law changes that most Michigan voters probably consider logical and modest. Secretary of State Ruth Johnson has made a good case for her plan to smooth elections and boost public confidence. Good sense should prevail over raw emotion.*

Among the changes, Johnson proposes a photo ID requirement, such as drivers' licenses or state-issued cards, for voters who show up at clerks' offices requesting absentee ballots. That's nothing more than an extension of existing state law requiring IDs at the polls on election days.

Johnson also wants to require get-out-the-vote groups to register with the state and get some basic training before they sign up new voters.

Michigan was among many states that had trouble with activist groups improperly registering voters before the 2008 election. This reform would guard against a repeat.

Detroit community activists and the Service Employees International Union see this as a plot to turn away voters most likely to favor their candidates, not to mention their ballot proposals repealing the emergency manager law and ingraining closed union shops in Michigan's constitution.

Voter ID is a hot national issue right now, but Michigan has had the requirement at polling places for several election cycles and there have been no true problems.

Most folks have drivers' licenses containing their photos. State photo ID cards are available to those who don't, and they're free to residents who are 65 or older, are legally blind, whose drivers' licenses are suspended or revoked, or who qualify for financial assistance.

Under Johnson's plan, anyone who arrived at the clerk's office without a photo ID still could get an absentee ballot by signing an affidavit attesting to his or her identity. The same affidavit-signing option, by the way, is available at polling places. Registered voters who forget to bring ID are still able to vote.

Under the circumstances, the proposed new ID mandate hardly seems radical enough to merit the passionate opposition it's receiving.

Training requirements for voter registration organizations are a bit more problematic since some, such as the League of Women Voters, have been at it a long time and have an unblemished record. If there's a way to grandfather them in without opening the door to less-scrupulous groups, that would be a good idea.

But Johnson says the training would take only about a half-hour and be required for just one member of an organization. She's looking to conduct it through local clerk's offices — or maybe even online. That doesn't seem onerous.

Election problems are uncommon in Michigan. But incidents such as 2010's fake tea party slate in Oakland County point to the need for vigilance.

Improving the rules to avoid glitches and maintain voter confidence is a good idea. Many of Johnson's proposals, in fact, have more to do with behind-the-scenes stuff involving election clerks, poll workers and ballot counting than with citizens' voting rights.

It's a sign of our divisive times that the reforms trigger suspicions that a voter-suppression agenda is afoot. If critics listened more objectively, they'd realize the proposals won't keep legitimate voters away from the polls.

From The Detroit News:

<http://www.detroitnews.com/article/20120527/OPINION01/205270312#ixzz1xUpsU1Ra>