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Jorgensen's Journal: The Cost of Voter ID Laws

Recently, a constituent reached out to me about the problems that many people in the community faced during our state's primary election because of the voter ID laws.

Those challenges included limited mobility and lack of transportation, which made it almost impossible for some to obtain a voter ID. This was especially true for elderly members of the community. Another challenge was long lines at multiple polling stations, caused by reduced polling locations, reduced polling staff, and confusion about acceptable voter IDs.

The 43rd Assembly District is not the only area that experienced these problems. I have heard similar stories from across the state about how the people of Wisconsin have been disenfranchised by the voter ID laws. Students, elderly, disabled persons, and countless others were denied their right to vote due to either inability to obtain a photo ID or being turned away at the polls for not having proper identification.

While the voter ID available at a Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) office may be free, there are a lot of hurdles to overcome before you can get it. Due to health conditions, limited mobility, or lack of transportation, going to a DMV can be a very difficult task for some. Additionally, DMVs have very limited hours and days of operation, creating yet another barrier, even for those with access to transportation. Once at a DMV office, you are required to have documents proving citizenship, name and date of birth, identity, residency, and social security number. Often times there are hidden costs for any documentation you might be missing.

It seems that these supposedly free voter IDs can have quite a large cost for many people.

I believe it is the duty of the elected officials in Legislature to make our government more accessible to folks, not make it more difficult to participate. We were elected to serve the people of Wisconsin and I feel it's critically important to our democracy that all eligible voters have every opportunity to participate in our elections, not discouraged from voting.

All eligible citizens should have the right to vote, regardless of their income or ability. Something has to change, and we all need to come together in order to find a solution.

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