



# THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF GEORGIA

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## League of Women Voters Praises Decision to Halt Photo ID Law

ATLANTA – October 18, 2005 – The League of Women Voters of Georgia (LWVGA) praised today's judicial decision to grant an injunction that will relieve Georgia voters from the restrictive photo ID requirement signed into law earlier this year. The League was among a consortium of voting rights advocates and private attorneys that requested an injunction in federal district court in Rome, Ga., on October 12, 2005 challenging House Bill 244 on the grounds that it violates the state and federal constitutions, the 1965 Voting Rights Act and the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Today, a federal district court judge agreed.

Judge Harold Murphy of the Northern District Court Rome Division granted the injunction relieving Georgia voters from the restrictive photo ID requirement for the upcoming general election on November 8, 2005. "In reaching this conclusion, the Court observes that it has great respect for the Georgia legislature. The Court, however, simply has more respect for the Constitution."

Jennifer L. Owens, Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of Georgia stated, "We are pleased with the court's ruling and hope this early victory is an entrée to a larger win that will ultimately overturn the photo ID requirement. Voters across Georgia should rejoice knowing that the obstacles between them and casting a ballot have been cleared, at least temporarily. Today's decision is in line with the greater mission of the League to safeguard the democratic process for all voters by promoting open and equal access to elections."

Signed into law by Gov. Sonny Perdue in April, the measure reduces the various forms of identification that voters can use from 17 to six, requiring government-issued photo identification.

After the U.S. Department of Justice granted pre-clearance to the measure on August 26, a motion that was mandated by the 1965 Voting Rights Act because of Georgia's history of voting discrimination, the lawsuit was filed against state and local election officials asking the federal court to declare H.B. 244 "unconstitutional, null and void" and issue both preliminary and permanent injunctions against implementation of the law on the following grounds:

- H.B. 244 violates the 14th Amendment because it treats voters unequally.
- H.B. 244 violates the 1965 Voting Rights Act because it results in the denial of voting rights to African-American and Latino voters.
- H.B. 244 violates the Georgia Constitution because it creates an entirely new set of voting qualifications beyond those specified in the State Constitution.

- H.B. 244 violates the 1964 Civil Rights Act because it applies different standards for voters who vote in person compared to those who vote by absentee ballot and disqualifies voters based solely on whether they have a government-issued photo ID, even if they are personally known to election officials, or their signatures match the one on their official voter registration card.

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“Of the 20 states that require voters to present some form of ID, only two – Indiana and now Georgia – require voters to present a photo ID as the sole method of voter identification,” Jennifer Owens, executive director of the LWVGA, said. “While the League remains dedicated to addressing voter fraud and ensuring our elections are secure and accessible to all voters, this law does just the opposite and effectively makes our state among the most difficult in the nation in which to vote.”

In addition to the League, other organizational plaintiffs include: Common Cause/Georgia, the NAACP; the Central Presbyterian Outreach and Advocacy Center; the Georgia Association of Black Elected Officials; the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus and; Concerned Black Clergy of Metropolitan Atlanta. Other groups that are providing legal counsel to the effort include the ACLU, AARP, Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. The lawsuit also was filed on behalf two individual voters: Mr. Tony Watkins, an African-American resident of Rome, and Mrs. Clara Williams, an African-American resident of Fulton County. Each of the individual plaintiffs is legally registered and qualified to vote, but does not possess a Georgia driver’s license, passport or other form of photo ID specified in H.B. 244.

#### **About the League of Women Voters of Georgia**

Founded in 1920, The League of Women Voters of Georgia is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy. For more information, contact the League by e-mailing [lwvga@lwvga.org](mailto:lwvga@lwvga.org) or calling (678) 547-0755.

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