



STATE OF MINNESOTA

Office of Governor Mark Dayton

130 State Capitol ♦ 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard ♦ Saint Paul, MN 55155

April 9, 2012

The Honorable Kurt Zellers
Speaker of the House
State Office Building, Room 463
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I have vetoed and am returning Chapter 167, House File 2738. It would amend the Minnesota Constitution, to require picture identification for citizens to exercise their constitutional right to vote.

Although I do not have the power to prevent this unwise and unnecessary Constitutional Amendment from appearing on the Minnesota ballot in November, the Legislature has sent it to me in the form of a bill. Thus, I am exercising my legal responsibility to either sign or veto the amendment. I am vetoing the amendment and its title; and I urge Minnesotans to reject it in November.

For the past two years, Republican legislative leaders have shunned bi-partisan election reforms that would have increased security and modernized our elections processes. When I vetoed the partisan Photo ID bill last session, I called for, and subsequently named, a non-partisan Task Force to examine the alleged problem of felons voting illegally. However, its proposed legislation was ignored in this session, while this partisan amendment was passed in both bodies by almost straight party-line votes.

Legislators had yet another chance to pass bi-partisan legislation, which would have established visual verification of voters. Secretary of State Mark Ritchie, Members of both parties, and I proposed an alternative, which would have visually verified voters, provided improved security, and modernized Minnesota's elections. If the legislative majority really wanted to visually confirm voters' identities at polling places, improve election efficiencies, and reduce their costs, that bill presented an ideal opportunity. Unfortunately, real reform was once again rejected and the chance to modernize and improve our elections denied, in favor of partisan political gain.

This amendment is a proverbial wolf in sheep's clothing. It goes far beyond its stated intention to require Photo ID's. Instead, it dismantles Minnesota's Best-in-the-Nation election system. According to the Secretary of State, this amendment would end same day voter registration, long a goal of many Republican partisans, and require an entirely new system of provisional balloting. It would severely restrict absentee voting, mail-in voting, and balloting for members of our Armed Forces and others overseas. Local election officials, township officials, and representatives from the cities and counties have all voiced their concerns and their opposition to many of those changes and the burdens they would impose.

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A constitutional requirement that "all voters must be subjected to substantially equivalent identity and eligibility verification" places barriers to voting on our seniors who no longer drive, our soldiers who vote overseas, and our students who attend colleges and universities away from home. It will make voting much harder for thousands of other eligible voters, who will find it difficult or impossible to attain government-issued photo identifications in order to prove their identities. Verifying eligibility will negatively affect any voter who has utilized same day registration (over 500,000 in a presidential year), absentee voters (195,000), Military and overseas voters (11,500), and our mail balloting voters (45,000). Virtually no class of voter is left unscathed by these extreme alterations in our citizens' access to their elections.

Minnesota's election system has been designed and perfected over many years by citizens, legislators, and governors of all parties. Their success has been affirmed by our usually leading the nation in voter participation. It was also upheld, when statewide recounts in the last two elections showed exceptional accuracy and no evidence of any significant voter fraud.

Previous Governors Arne Carlson and Tim Pawlenty have said correctly that significant changes to our elections processes should not occur through partisan contrivances, but only with broad bipartisan support. I stated that same reason for my vetoing last year's legislation. Unfortunately, most Republican legislators have chosen to misuse their majorities in both bodies to force this ill-intended amendment on Minnesota voters. I will trust in their wisdom to reject it.

Sincerely,



Mark Dayton
Governor

cc: Senator Michelle L. Fischbach, President of the Senate
Senator David H. Senjem, Senate Majority Leader
Senator Thomas M. Bakk, Senate Minority Leader
Senator Scott Newman
Representative Paul Thissen, House Minority Leader
Representative Mary Kiffmeyer
The Honorable Mark Ritchie, Secretary of State
Mr. Cal R. Ludeman, Secretary of the Senate
Mr. Albin A. Mathiowetz, Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives