

KRIS W. KOBACH
Secretary of State



Memorial Hall, 1st Floor
120 S.W. 10th Avenue
Topeka, KS 66612-1594
(785) 296-4575
www.sos.ks.gov

STATE OF KANSAS

June 3, 2011

KOBACH'S COLUMN

Kansas Secretary of State Kris W. Kobach

Drafted by my office, the Kansas Secure and Fair Elections Act (SAFE Act) combines three elements to do just that—protect the franchise. The new law (1) requires voters to present photo IDs when voting in person; (2) requires absentee voters to present a full driver's license number and have their signatures verified; and (3) requires all newly registered voters to prove citizenship. Although other states have enacted one or two of these reforms, Kansas is the only state to enact all three.

Immediately after our law was signed, critics cried foul. They argued that voter fraud isn't significant enough to warrant such steps, that large numbers of Americans don't possess photo IDs, and that such laws will depress turnout among the poor and among minorities. They are wrong on all three counts.

Voter fraud is a well-documented reality in American elections. For example, a 2010 state representative race in Kansas City, MO was stolen when one candidate, J.J. Rizzo, allegedly received more than 50 votes illegally cast by citizens of Somalia. The Somalis, who didn't speak English, were coached to vote for Mr. Rizzo by an interpreter at the polling place. The margin of victory? One vote.

In Kansas, my office already has found 67 aliens illegally registered to vote in Kansas. In Colorado, the Secretary of State's office recently identified 11,805 aliens illegally registered to vote in the state, of whom 4,947 cast a ballot in the 2010 elections.

Public confidence in the integrity of elections is at an all-time low. In the Cooperative Congressional Election Study of 2008, 62% of American voters thought that voter fraud was very common or somewhat common. A 2011 Survey USA poll of Kansas voters showed that 83% support proof-of-citizenship requirements for voter registration.

Critics of these laws nevertheless make outrageous arguments against them. New York University's Brennan Center claims that a whopping 11% of the American voting-age public (tens of millions of people) don't possess a photo ID. But according to the 2010 census, there are 2,126,179 Kansans of voting age, and according to the Kansas Department of Motor Vehicles, 2,156,446 Kansans already have a driver's license or a non-driver ID. In other words, there are more photo IDs in circulation than there are eligible voters. It's not unreasonable to require one in order to protect our most important privilege of citizenship.

Some opponents of election security laws also declare that they are part of a sinister plot to depress voter registration and turnout, especially among minority voters who are more likely to vote Democrat. But Georgia's photo ID requirement was in place when turnout among minority voters was higher than average. Likewise, Arizona's proof-of-citizenship requirement for registration has not impeded minority voters from registering.

If election security laws really were part of a Republican scheme to suppress Democratic votes, one would expect Democrats to fight such laws, tooth and nail. That didn't happen in Kansas, where two-thirds of the Democrats in the House and three-fourths of the Democrats in the Senate voted in favor of the SAFE Act. They did so because they realize that fair elections protect every voter and every party equally.

Your Secretary of State,
Kris Kobach

P.S. Did you know that Kansas flags can now be ordered online? Visit www.sos.ks.gov and on the lower right side of the screen click on the Quick Link called "NEW! Order Flags Online."