

NEWS RELEASE

Citizens for Election Integrity Minnesota and
Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance

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Report shows that a photo identification requirement to vote is unnecessary. *Minnesota should allow felons on parole and probation the right to vote*

St. Paul, MN—November 22, 2010—Citizens for Election Integrity Minnesota (CEIMN) and Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance (MUUSJA) released a report on ineligible voting and voter fraud based on data from the 2008 election collected earlier this year from Minnesota's County Attorneys.

County Attorneys from 71 of Minnesota's 87 counties, representing 93.3% of Minnesota's 2008 voters, responded to the survey. "When we heard that some people wanted to institute a photo identification requirement to vote in Minnesota, we decided to learn if it would be a solution to a real problem," said Carol Johnson, co-author of the report and a member of MUUSJA. The survey included questions about non-citizens voting, double voting, voting outside of jurisdiction, and voter impersonation. While those issues accounted for 23% of the just over 1,500 total investigations of possible ineligible voting statewide, they resulted in zero convictions.

The remaining 77% of investigations were related to possible felons voting, and resulted in a total of 26 convictions statewide due to felons voting illegally. Based on 2008 voter turnout, this means that nine ten-thousandths of one percent (0.0009%) of 2008 voters were convicted of fraud. "Not one single piece of government-issued identification shows someone's criminal status, so a photo identification requirement would not have prevented the only kind of fraud that occurred. Based on this knowledge and our report, we strongly recommend against instituting a photo ID requirement to vote in Minnesota," stated Kathy Bonnifield, co-author and Associate Director of CEIMN. She continued, "We could have stopped there—but we decided to learn more about felon disenfranchisement in Minnesota."

Studies by Christopher Uggen, Distinguished McKnight Professor and Sociology Department Chair at the University of Minnesota, have shown a link to decreased recidivism rates among individuals who participate in elections. In addition, Uggen found that since 1974, disenfranchisement in Minnesota increased over 500%. He also reported that 1 out of 10 voting-age African-American Minnesotans cannot vote because of a felony conviction while 1 out of 100 voting-age white Minnesotans are disenfranchised for the same reason.

In addition to recommending that a photo identification requirement to vote not be instituted, the report recommends allowing all nonincarcerated felons the opportunity to vote, which would allow more people a voice in their community while protecting citizens by reducing felon recidivism.

A third recommendation is to change *MS§204C.035 Deceptive Practices in Elections* from a gross misdemeanor to a felony with a requirement to serve time. Currently, the statute states that it is a gross misdemeanor for someone to "knowingly deceive another person regarding the time, place, or manner of conducting an election or the qualifications for or restrictions on voter eligibility for an election, with the intent to prevent the individual from voting in the election." "If someone is found guilty of an elections-related crime, their punishment should be that they cannot vote," stated Bonnifield.

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