

MISSOURI VOTER PROTECTION COALITION

May 31, 2018

Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft
James Kirkpatrick Building, 3rd Floor
600 W. Main Street
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Director Joel Walters
Missouri Department of Revenue
Harry S Truman State Office Building
301 West High Street
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Dear Secretary Ashcroft and Director Walters,

As grassroots and non-profit voter advocates in Missouri, we work to remove barriers that impede the right to vote and discourage democratic participation. Missouri is in violation of provisions of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), a law designed to aid voter registration. We write today to urge you to bring our state into compliance with this law so Missourians can properly exercise our fundamental right to vote.

As described in a lawsuit filed by the League of Women Voters of Missouri and the A. Philip Randolph Institute's St. Louis and Greater Kansas City Chapters, Missouri routinely fails to provide Department of Revenue (DOR) customers with the opportunity to register to vote required under the NVRA. For one, DOR completely denies voter registration services to clients who change the address for their driver's license or state-issued identification card online or by mail. It also fails to provide required voter registration services to Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) customers changing their address in person (by failing to automatically update these customers' voter registration information unless the customer opts out). Missouri even places illegal obstacles on military members and their families when they apply for or renew a license or identification card in the mail. These failures to meet federal voter registration obligations have serious consequences for the voters of Missouri.

Voter registration should not act as a burden to qualified Missourians seeking to exercise their fundamental right to vote. Yet time and again, our organizations have seen Missouri voters denied this right due to unnecessary registration barriers. For example, many voters do not realize that they need to update their voter registration information when they move within the state. This is why the NVRA requires that DOR automatically update the voter registration information of any clients who change their address for driver's license or state identification card

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purposes unless the client affirmatively requests that DOR not do so. DOR is failing to meet this requirement during both in-person and remote transactions.

In 2016 alone, over 750,000 Missourians moved within the state. Registered voters moving within and between counties, and particularly those moving across the lines separating St. Louis City and Kansas City from their adjoining counties, often do not realize they need to update their registration information or even that they have crossed into a different election jurisdiction. It is not until these voters show up to the polls to vote that they learn that they cannot cast a regular ballot. Even though these voters should receive provisional ballots, those ballots are rejected if not cast in the correct polling place. In order to ensure that Missouri voters can fully participate in this year's elections, Missouri must take steps to bring DOR into compliance with the NVRA and establish procedures to allow any resident who has been denied voter registration services when submitting a change of address to DOR online or by mail to cast a ballot and have it counted.

Accurate management of voter registration data is essential to the state's election administration. Missouri's serious and ongoing failure to provide DOR customers with the voter registration services guaranteed by federal law makes it more difficult for local elections authorities to maintain accurate voter rolls, creates confusion at the polls, results in longer lines, increases voter frustration, and strips Missouri residents of their right to vote.

Congress enacted the NVRA in 1993 to encourage more Americans to register to vote by facilitating registration through motor vehicle and other state agencies and by eliminating onerous registration requirements. The current practices administered by DOR and allowed to persist by the Secretary of State are exactly the type of barriers that the NVRA prohibits. The fixes to these problems are straightforward, cost effective, and require little infrastructure. Accordingly, we urge you to take swift action and enact the commonsense fixes mandated by the NVRA to remove unnecessary voter registration burdens and ensure the accuracy of the voter rolls in upcoming elections this year. The NVRA requires it, and the citizens of Missouri demand it.

Sincerely,

THE MISSOURI VOTER PROTECTION COALITION

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Signatories:

- Advancement Project
- American Association of University Women St. Louis Chapter
- American Civil Liberties Union of Missouri
- ACLU People Power Kansas City
- A. Philip Randolph Institute
- Beyond Housing
- Central Reform Congregation
- Christian Ministries of Higginsville
- Coalition of Labor Union Women, St. Louis Chapter
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., KCMO Alumnae Chapter
- Empower Missouri
- Faith Voices of Southwest MO
- First Wednesday Progressive Activist Network
- Grandparents Against Gun Violence
- Indivisible St. Louis
- League of Women Voters of Missouri
- League of Women Voters of St. Louis
- League of Women Voters of Kansas City, Jackson, Clay and Platte Counties
- League of Women Voters of Columbia/Boone County
- League of Women Voters of Southwest Missouri
- Metropolitan Congregations United
- Missouri Coalition of Labor Union Women
- Missouri Faith Voices
- Missouri Immigrant and Refugee Advocates
- Missouri Jobs with Justice
- Mitchell Resource Center for Social Justice
- Fifth Senate District Committeeman Marty Joe Murray
- NAACP Missouri State Conference
- NARAL Pro Choice Missouri
- National Council of Jewish Women St. Louis Section
- State Representative Stacey Newman
- Organization for Black Struggle
- Planned Parenthood Advocates in Missouri
- Post Office Women Equal Rights (POWER), St. Louis Gateway DAL/APWU
- Project Power to the People
- PROMO
- Reale Justice Network
- Saline County Democratic Club
- SEIU Missouri/Kansas State Council
- Sierra Club, Missouri Chapter
- Sixth Ward Alderwoman, City of St. Louis
- Social Justice Doulas International.
- Southwest Center for Independent Living
- St. Francis Xavier College Church
- West County Community Action Network
- Women's Voices Raised for Social Justice
- What U Can Do