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Secretary Padilla Opposes New Federal Voter ID Legislation

SACRAMENTO – California Secretary of State Alex Padilla announced today his opposition to H.R. 2090, [introduced by Indiana Rep. Luke Messer](#), which requires voters to present photo identification before casting a ballot in federal elections. The full text of the Secretary’s opposition letter can be found below:

Dear Rep. Luke Messer,

As California’s chief elections officer, it is my duty to expand and defend voting rights and increase voter participation. I believe that every eligible citizen should have an opportunity to register and exercise their right to vote. Voter photo identification requirements run counter to this objective and suppress the vote for the elderly, young, low-income, and persons of color. For this reason, I must submit this letter in strong opposition to H.R. 2090 which seeks to radically amend the bipartisan Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) by imposing unnecessary and harmful obstacles to voting.

Voter photo ID requirements disenfranchise significant portions of the population that are entitled to vote. A recent study by the University of California, San Diego found that photo identification laws have a differentially negative impact on the turnout of Hispanics, Blacks and mixed-race Americans in primaries and general elections. Members of racial and ethnic minorities are less likely to have valid photo ID, while turnout among whites in states with Voter ID laws is largely unaffected, according to this study.

H.R. 2090 is a “solution” in search of a problem. In November, when President Donald Trump made unsubstantiated and debunked claims of massive fraud, I worried that his true agenda was to roll back hard-won voting rights. With your legislation, I am afraid I was correct.

Supporters of voter ID laws will claim their intention is to ensure election integrity or prevent fraud. Contrary to these claims, including the baseless claims by President Trump, research has established that voter fraud is exceedingly rare. One report cites just 31 incidents out of one billion votes cast.

Voter ID laws are facing legal scrutiny. This month, a federal judge ruled that a voter identification law passed by the Texas Legislature in 2011 was discriminatory against black and

Latino voters, violating the Voting Rights Act. I agree that this law was designed to discriminate. I am concerned that H.R. 2090 shares the same intent.

Increasing voter participation should be our shared goal. I am proud that more than 19.4 million Californians were registered and eligible to vote in the 2016 General Election and more than 14.6 million voted – both state records.

Rather than engaging in government sanctioned voter suppression that prevents eligible citizens from their right to vote, Congress should invest in our democracy by providing much needed funding to update and secure our nation's voting systems. Voter ID laws only serve to marginalize already marginalized communities. Making it harder for American citizens to vote is un-American.

I oppose H.R. 2090 because it undermines the voting rights of American citizens. It seeks to disenfranchise already underrepresented communities. We can and must do better as a country.

Sincerely,

Alex Padilla
California Secretary of State

CC:
Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House

Rep. Zoe Lofgren, Chair
California Congressional Delegation

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