



Natalie E. Tennant
Secretary of State
State of West Virginia

Office of the Secretary of State
Building 1, Suite 157-K
1900 Kanawha Blvd. E.
Charleston, WV 25305

Telephone: (304) 558-6000
Toll-Free: 1-866-SOS-VOTE
Fax: (304) 558-0900
www.wvsos.com

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Contact: Jake Glance
jglance@wvsos.com

Tennant Vows To Protect Citizens From Expensive Voting Laws; Urges Support of County Clerks And Voter List Maintenance

Charleston, W.Va. – West Virginia Secretary of State Natalie E. Tennant said today she will fight any law that suppresses voter turnout, makes it more difficult for people in rural areas of the state to vote, increases the wait time for voters at the polling place on Election Day, or costs a voter money.

“The Republican Party in West Virginia wants to pass oppressive laws that make it harder for an eligible citizen to exercise their right to vote,” Secretary Tennant said. “They are proposing solutions to fix a problem that doesn’t exist. What we should be focusing on is helping election officials maintain voter registration rolls and new technology like electronic poll books that help keep track of those who have already voted.

“I have been working for years to purge the voter rolls of dead voters and have had no support from the GOP. They have had chances to address a very real problem we have here in West Virginia and have done nothing. Now they want to spend time and money to make it more difficult and costly for legal voters to cast their ballot. It makes no sense.”

Secretary Tennant said passing Voter Suppression laws, like requiring an already legally registered voter to produce photo identification, would not have stopped election law violations similar to the absentee voting scheme in Lincoln County in 2010. Secretary Tennant’s Investigations Unit relentlessly examined evidence for more than 18 months in that case and brought three elected officials to justice.

There are already requirements for a voter to provide identification when voting. If it is a citizen’s first time voting after they registered by mail to vote, they have to produce a document that shows their name and current residence address. That document could be a driver’s license, paycheck, or utility bill.

A voter is verified in the polling place by comparing their signature, which is the same verification process that the GOP has proposed.

“Forcing people who have been voting legally for years to obtain a photo ID would be a hardship if they are elderly with limited mobility. It might be difficult for a woman who was married in another state to obtain a marriage certificate. And if a voter wants to vote and doesn’t have an ID, what then? They will have to vote a provisional ballot, and that means poll workers have more paperwork to fill out. The end result is longer lines at the polling place. And then it will be up to a subjective three member Board of Canvassers to decide if that ballot will even be counted. These Voter Suppression laws will have far reaching impact on the election process that I believe will keep people who are legally entitled to vote from casting their ballot. We cannot allow that to happen. Our democracy is too important.”