



Sunday, April 27, 2025

Dear Members of the Transportation, Highways, and Public Works Committee:

The League of Women Voters of Louisiana writes to **OPPOSE** the following bill scheduled on the agenda of the Transportation, Highways, and Public Works Committee of the Louisiana Legislature for hearing at its meeting on Monday, April 28, 2025:

HB554 (Representative Dixon McMakin) MTR VEHICLE/DRIVER LIC: Establishes a notice of voting restriction and a restriction code applicable to persons who are not United States citizens and aliens lawfully present in the United States but have not attained United States citizenship (OR +\$338,048 GF EX See Note)

Matters of citizenship and paths to naturalization are an issue of substantial importance to the League. Registering newly naturalized citizens to vote is a cherished activity among many League members. The League of Women Voters of New Orleans has received grants and praise for its weekly voter registration session at the Immigration and Customs Court in New Orleans for years. Our six local leagues around the state also register newly naturalized voters at local Constitution Day celebrations and other civic occasions. So, we are concerned about any processes that throw up roadblocks to newly naturalized citizens registering to vote and casting their ballots.

We are particularly concerned about processes that would require the Office of Motor Vehicles to communicate with noncitizens, and potentially newly naturalized citizens, about their right to vote. As we all know, the Louisiana OMV was subject to a cyber attack in 2023 that severely compromised the privacy of Louisianans records. The GeauxPass toll paying system was last year and apparently continues to be the focus of Russian smishing attacks that have compromised Louisianans' data and in some cases defrauded them of funds. And we remember, as well, the mailing snafu by the Secretary of State in the summer of 2020 that left 300,000 voters off the sign-up letter for the automatic program that would allow them to have mail-in ballots sent to their homes.

If even the Secretary of State, who is the person most responsible for postal communication with voters did not get it right, how can we be assured that the short-staffed and cybersecurity challenged OMV offices would get it right? What are the OMV's privacy and security mechanisms for handling sensitive voter and citizenship data? What is the efficacy and the level of correctness and updatedness of information of any mailing address programs associated with delivering these notifications in a timely manner to their intended recipients? What is the process by which the OMV (or the SOS) would receive information about newly naturalized citizens of the sort that the League regularly serves?

We are very concerned that the proposed program and the “restriction code” that it establishes might turn out to be over-inclusive—especially without adequate coordination between immigration authorities and the OMV and that letters might be sent to newly naturalized or about to be naturalized residents that might deter them from registering to vote at all. At the League, we have found that getting new citizens registered early is really the gold standard when it comes to enabling them and encouraging them to exercise their rights and obligations as citizens—by voting.

As we learned last year in connection with the enactment of new laws prohibiting noncitizen voting, the problem is exceedingly rare in Louisiana. Secretary of State Nancy Landry reported that only 48 noncitizens had been found on the voter rolls in the three years prior. They were located and removed, and there was no indication that any of them attempted to cast a vote. They likely complete the voter registration forms by mistake among many other forms associated with documentation of their status in our communities.

But correspondence from OMVs that may be sent in error or without information concerning their current status could end up deterring them from voting in a state where we should be encouraging new, lawful voters to vote. We are not unequivocally opposed to setting up such a scheme at the OMV, but we see a number of potential flaws that deserve the Committee’s consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Christian Green". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

M. Christian Green
President, League of Women Voters of Louisiana
Chair, LWVLA Voting Rights Committee