

It's pretty simple: ID requirements are voter intimidation and disenfranchisement

It seems so simple.

On election day, you arrive at your polling place, walk in and show them your voter registration card along with a government-issued ID. Vote, walk out.



BY ANTHONY HARRISON
STAFF WRITER

If you don't have identification, you can't vote.

It seems so simple when you look at it simply. But it simply isn't that simple.

Since 2011, state governments across the nation, including North Carolina, have pushed for stricter voting legislation, ranging from restrictions on election-day registration to measures delaying early voting. However, the most notable proposition is to require voters to present identification at the polls.

To you or me, that may seem like a decent proposal. It's likely that most of us have a driver's license or a passport or something handy.

However, laws of this sort would exclude around 450,000 North Carolina voters on election day, an amount composed largely of minorities, the poor, seniors, and students like us.

If the ID laws take away so many votes, why is there a push to enact these laws?

The reason lawmakers give is that the laws will cut down on voter fraud. "Voter fraud" itself is a blanket term for a myriad of offenses, including vote buying and voter intimidation, but legislators provide accounts of double-voting, deceased voters, or felons voting.

However, according to New York University's Brennan Center for Justice, many of these accounts were disproved after investigation of the stories and the alleged perpetrators. Also, they point out that fraudulent votes account for minuscule fractions of percentages of the electorate and that voter fraud itself carries a punishment of a \$10,000 fine and five years in federal prison.

For one vote.

In my opinion, it's wildly unnecessary to enforce strident restrictions on upwards of 10 percent of the electorate for a problem which occurs as low as 0.00004 percent of the time.

So I ask again: why enact these laws?

The movement for stricter voting laws has been led by conservative governors and legislatures across the board. If that doesn't speak volumes, then I'll allow Pennsylvania House Majority Leader Mike Turzai to speak on his colleagues' behalf: "Voter ID (will) allow Governor Romney to win the state of Pennsylvania."

He said it himself: the voter ID movement is a partisan machination to eliminate Democrat-leaning voters.

North Carolina's Republican gubernatorial hopeful Pat McCrory also wishes to install voter identification laws in this state, and cites the uniform reason — voting fraud is a problem that must be fixed.

"If you don't look for it, you won't find it," McCrory stated. "Nobody's looking." Well, Mr. McCrory, I looked.

According to the Republican National Lawyers' Association, North Carolina tallied only 15 cases of assorted voter fraud in the past 12 years: six counts of non-resident voting, five charges of vote buying, and four cases of double-voting.

Only the cases of double-voting occurred in the last election cycle. One of the defendants, Kierra Leach, said that she voted early, then voted on election day because she believed her early vote wouldn't count.

"It was an accident," Leach claimed. "It wasn't planned or anything."

Aye, there's the rub: the electorate is afraid of disenfranchisement even before they cast their vote. But the democratic process shouldn't be intimidating; it should be a basic right enjoyed by all Americans. We shouldn't bar people from voting because they don't have a piece of plastic with their picture on it, and we shouldn't force them to jump an unnecessary hurdle to vote.

So let's drop this "voter fraud" nonsense.

Let's keep it simple.

This Week's

STAFF EDITORIAL

What qualifies as awareness?

October is not just the month when trees shake their branches to clear the leaves that will ultimately collect in massive piles on the ground. Nor is it only the month where we get to dress up in creative costumes and consume an enormous amount of sweets. During the month of October we observe National Breast Cancer Awareness, Domestic Violence Awareness, Disability Awareness and other causes of which we should be aware.

How many pink products do we see this month on the shelves of stores trying to persuade us that every purchase is one step closer to a cure for breast cancer? How many people are willing to run or walk long distances because they are told every step counts? We all want to do our part and bring an end to breast cancer or help someone escape an abusive relationship.

Companies and organizations even try to lend a helping hand. But how do we know if we're actually making progress or the money we help raise is actually being used for its original purpose?

Take the Susan G. Komen foundation. It is the most well-known organization that supports breast cancer and you can see the name on nearly every pink product sold in stores. But the organization has received criticism for benefitting from corporate partnerships that produce goods which contain harmful ingredients instead of focusing on promoting awareness on how breast cancer can be avoided or detected and how those who have been diagnosed can find a way to cope.

There is thus another important kind of awareness. It begins with knowing exactly what we are standing up for and how and where we can contribute. But it also means follow through to guarantee that our contributions are being used to make the difference we seek. How can we trust that the money we give to help others is actually helping? That isn't to say we should be suspicious of every organization that is working towards helping a cause, but we should be informed.

Nobody should feel bad about questioning where the proceeds of an organization go because it is our duty to question if the organization is being honest. Don't feel guilty about doing the research. Once you have the answers you seek, you can be confident that you are able to bring awareness to others.

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Deconstructing the "America for Jesus" Manifesto

The America for Jesus rallies were held last month in Philadelphia, much to the chagrin of rational human beings everywhere. They featured several prominent religious pundits, such as the infamously homophobic Pat Robertson. The predominant idea was to make all Americans accept Jesus.



BY ELIAS BLONDEAU
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Running concurrently to the rallies was the Awakening Youth Rally, which had a goal of "compelling our generation to radically abandon itself to a lifestyle of worship."

The manifesto on their website says our country is in a "state of emergency," and there is only one way to "heal the land." The video embedded on the website speaks of "one remedy." What is it, you ask?

Surprise: the only answer is Jesus, according to the well-made piece of propaganda.

Apparently, we can no longer rely on "education, government or man's wisdom." Never mind that many of our greatest minds, such as Darwin, Twain, and Einstein, have had little to no belief in God. Relying on the resurrection of a man who's been dead for millennia sounds like the only plausible solution, right?

Speaking of ancient history, I wasn't aware that we were a nation "founded under prayer." In fact, I was raised believing in our Constitution, which explicitly states that church and state should remain separate. And as I recall, most of our founding fathers were deist and, as such, rejected the idea that prayer could summon God to change things. But I've been living a lie, I suppose, if the people at AFJ are to be believed.

The quotes ripped straight from their manifesto in the paragraphs are horrific. Here we have a large group who believe gay people are sinners and who think women should have no control over their own bodies.

It seems their idea of "acceptance" is shoving their agenda

down the nation's gullet.

For most of my life, I've believed in an America where I can live my own way and not be afraid to voice my views. But I've been mistaken, according to the fine folks running AFJ, who plan to "summon together the whole body of Christ to pray for the church and our nation."

This is not true Christianity. Jesus taught loving all different types, but these people twist his kind words into hate speech. I used to be religious and felt nothing but good will from members of my former church. AFJ is not teaching anything positive; they're exploiting fears in people with weaker minds.

They're preaching the act of shunning nonbelievers. According to them, our moral backbone would be significantly strengthened by adopting a unified fear of a bipolar lunatic who summons fire and brimstone at a moment's notice. If you don't believe in this god, you'll go to hell, apparently. How charming.

As for me? I'll call their bluff. I refuse to worship and praise a god who would kill over sexual orientation or personal beliefs. I will not live in perpetual fear of being punished by a big man in the sky.

Why?

Because I believe in humanity and that there are truer forms of Christianity than this grotesque circus.

I believe love and tolerance are the only ways we can truly cooperate as a society. I believe a true religion preaches acceptance, not hate. Learning from others' perspectives will enlighten us to and inform us of differing viewpoints.

If we want a stronger America, we need to stop forcing our beliefs on others and start realizing some people might not appreciate the things we hold in such high esteem. Jesus was a great man, and anybody can learn something from his teachings. But using hate speech and degrading whole demographics is not the way people should learn of his word.

That's the America I believe in: an America for acceptance.