

Testimony of Lee and Phyllis Campbell
**“Excluded From Democracy: The Impact of
Recent State Voting Changes”**
November 14, 2011 at 2:00pm
Rayburn House Office Building 2226

Good afternoon. My name is Lee Campbell and I am a native of, Lake City, Calhoun County Iowa. I had a 42 year career in public education as a teacher and guidance counselor both in Iowa and Tennessee. I retired in 2006. I have never failed to vote in any election in which I was eligible beginning with my first presidential vote on November 3, 1964 at Twiggs' Café in Somers, Iowa.

I recently experienced first-hand the harmful impact of all these voting changes that are springing up across America. In my home state Tennessee, I had to fight for my right to have a voter ID be given to me according to the laws intent – FREE.

I traveled to my local DMV and I approached the worker at the information desk and stated that my wife was here and wanted to obtain the FREE voter photo ID. The person responded with a non verbal sigh, a sigh in effect indicating "oh no, not that." The worker then suggested why not just get a duplicate license for a fee of \$8? Cognizant of the fact that a senior citizen friend, Mr. Steve Blankenship of Murfreesboro, in the previous month had PAID the \$8 fee, I replied, "no, we want the FREE voter photo." At that point the worker held up one finger to indicate, "Just a moment." I intently watched the worker go to three different employees and upon return told me that there would be no charge and to return to the line which consisted of approximately 30 people. Keep in mind these 30 people are waiting in line just to get to the information desk.

I want to state right now that paying the \$8 fee was not the question as we could easily afford that. The point was the state legislature in passing this law had emphasized that the photo was to be free. Otherwise, in my opinion the fee could be considered a poll tax.

When we reached the information desk again the worker again reiterated that the wise choice was to get the photo on the drivers' license as opposed to getting a separate ID photo entailed too much paper work. That means for the 47,000 registered voters in Tennessee who do NOT have a drivers' license there is time consuming paper work involved.

We then took our seats so Phyllis could wait for her photograph. The whole procedure took 58 minutes.

I want to say at this point that the 58 minute wait didn't bother us, but we could readily understand that for an elderly or handicapped person the long wait in line could be daunting.

From information that was published in our daily paper, The Daily News Journal of Murfreesboro, the local Drivers' Testing Center in the last week of October, charged a WWII veteran the \$8 fee for his duplicate license with a photograph. This tells me that unless a person "stands their ground," such as I did, the Drivers' Testing Center is going to charge the fee for the photo. In fact an official with the Tennessee

Department of Public Safety stated to the press that the fee would be charged unless the applicant stated that he or she wanted the free photo ID. My question is, why else would a person be trying to get a photo on their license if it wasn't to get the FREE voter photo ID.

One week ago today I encountered another negative ramification of this, in my opinion, voter suppression legislation. I went into a business in Smyrna, Tennessee and was greeted by a former teaching colleague. This person is approximately 80 years of age and uses a cane to aid in mobility. This person inquired if I was still "politicking." This quickly led to a discussion of the new photo law. This person stated that voting was out of the question in the future. The principle reason is waiting in a long line in order to get the photograph. I then stated that I would be happy to drive said person to Drivers' Testing Center in the city of Murfreesboro. I further stated that I recently attended a meeting where the state director of elections said there were now "express lines" at the Drivers' Testing Centers for those needing a photo ID only. Since I'm almost from

Missouri, the Show Me State, I would have to see this to believe it.

The person then stated that perhaps a relative would take said person to the Drivers' Testing Center. Whether this person ever votes again is highly speculative.

Another thing that concerns me about the new Tennessee photo law is something I learned at a November 1 voter informational meeting in our county. The state director of elections was in attendance and stated that out of the nearly 175,000 Tennesseans that need a photo ID on their license or are registered to vote and don't have a license only 2,300 have obtained the free photo ID. In other words this is progressing at an extremely slow pace. I fear that many of these people will be denied their right to vote in the future.

In conclusion, I agree with something I read in the press recently-----this Voter Photo law is a "solution in need of a problem."