



*“Protecting the civil rights  
of all Americans.”*  
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## Founder

July 25, 2012

Hon. Robert B. Carleson

Governor Brian Schweitzer  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 200801  
Helena, MT 59620

## Policy Board

Hon. Edwin Meese III

Dear Governor Schweitzer,

Hon. William Bradford Reynolds

We are writing to you because of your May 5, 2011 [veto](#) of the voter photo ID law ([HB 152](#)). We believe this type of legislation is essential to preserving the integrity of our electoral process.

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Over the years, increasing numbers of close elections have awakened Americans to the importance of protecting honest elections. Last year all but 13 states introduced or had in place common-sense legislation to help prevent cheating, including requirements for voter identification. This flurry of activity came on the heels of verified reports of voter fraud in Colorado, Michigan, New Jersey, and many other states. Over the past decade, 46 states have had convictions or prosecutions for voter fraud. This is a matter of fact, not opinion. In fact, as recently as April 3, charges of forging signatures on petition ballots in the 2008 presidential race were filed against 4 Indiana Democratic officials and deputies.

Our Constitution's guarantee of self-governance relies upon free and fair elections, and our entire electoral process rests on the states upholding laws to protect the integrity of the vote. Every qualified voter should be confident that when he or she casts a ballot, it will not be diluted or cancelled out by voter fraud. Voting is not only a fundamental civil right, it is a privilege and obligation of citizenship. Voting standards and voter qualifications are essential elements of a self-governing republic.

It is a sad commentary that states acting to protect their electoral process through common-sense actions, like requiring a valid photo ID to vote, have been vilified for allegedly attempting to “suppress the minority vote,” or even “bring back Jim Crow laws.” That is utter nonsense!

Securing the integrity of the ballot box is in every American's interest regardless of race, party, or ethnicity. In two federal cases, including a 2008 U.S. Supreme Court ruling upholding Indiana's photo ID law, not a single plaintiff could be found who could plausibly claim inability to obtain a photo ID.

The American Civil Rights Union (ACRU) is deeply troubled by politicians who are willing to look the other way or actually hamper common-sense efforts to protect every citizen's right to have his or her vote count.

We are calling upon all states to safeguard the integrity of our uniquely American right of self-governance by taking common-sense measures such as:

- Requiring a photo ID to vote in person;
- Requiring proof of U.S. citizenship when registering to vote;
- Requiring signature verification and an acceptable proof of ID when voting by mail.

We have categorized states at [ProtectYourVote.us](http://ProtectYourVote.us) according to the level of voter protection in place:

**"Green-light"** states provide strong safeguards for voters;

**"Warning-light"** (yellow) states provide some voter protections, but have more work to do; and

**"Stop-light"** (red) states leave registration and the voting process vulnerable to those who would commit fraud.

Montana was on its way to "green-light" status, but it is now a "stop-light" state because of your veto of HB 152, which would require photo identification at the polls and tighten registration and absentee procedures. In your veto message, you referred to what virtually any American considers commonplace security requirements as "an unacceptable and unnecessary burden on many elderly voters, low-income voters, disabled voters and students" and "imposing new and unnecessary regulations."

Such reasons are demonstrably false.

The Supreme Court in 2008 upheld Indiana's state law requiring photographic identification as a condition for voting, stating that:

*"The application of the statute to the vast majority of Indiana voters is amply justified by the valid interest in protecting the integrity and reliability of the electoral process."*

The Supreme Court also noted that the "electoral system cannot inspire public confidence if no safeguards exist to deter or detect fraud or to confirm the identity of voters."

The ACRU is proud to have filed a brief in favor of the Indiana law and to have contributed to that landmark decision.

Many brave Americans have paid the ultimate price to protect our right to self-government. We must do all we can to ensure that their sacrifices were not in vain. The stakes are enormous. If our citizens lose confidence that their votes really count, it will spell the end of our 236-year experiment as a self-governing republic.

We hope that, as Governor of Montana, and someone who has taken the oath to uphold the U.S. Constitution, you would reconsider your opposition to voter integrity laws. Instead, we urge you to protect the interests of the citizens of your state by working with your

elected state representatives to require voters to identify themselves at the polls on Election Day and when they register to vote. We hope that you will assure them that in the future you would support this vital, common-sense safeguard of fair elections.

Sincerely,

Susan A. Carleson  
Chairman/CEO

Hon. Edwin Meese III  
Member, ACRU Board of Directors

Hon. J. Kenneth Blackwell  
Member, ACRU Policy Board