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**Testimony Supporting House Bill 5480,
An Act Concerning Registrars of Voters, the Authority of the Secretary of
the State and the State Elections Enforcement Commission, and the
Posting of Requirements for Voter Identification**

March 10, 2014

Senator Musto, Representative Jutila and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, my name is Andrew Schneider. I'm executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut and I'm here to testify in support of House Bill 5480, An Act Concerning Registrars of Voters, the Authority of the Secretary of the State and the State Elections Enforcement Commission, and the Posting of Requirements for Voter Identification.

As the 2012 election approached, controversy over strict photo identification requirements in other states was creating confusion over voter identification requirements in Connecticut. Concerned about this, the ACLU of Connecticut and the Connecticut NAACP sent a letter to all the registrars in the state shortly before the election, reminding them of Connecticut's voter identification requirements. We asked that they instruct poll workers not to demand or request photo identification or a driver's license because other forms of identification are acceptable by law in our state.

We followed up this effort with an informal request via social media that any voter who was asked for photo identification email or call us. Here are some of the accounts we received on Election Day:

- At a polling place in Bethel, a voter reported that poll workers insisted he show them a photo ID and would not admit him to the polls until he did so, under protest.
- In East Haven a voter was told that her ID with name and address was not sufficient and she was required to fill out an identity form before voting.
- In Old Saybrook, Andy Schatz, president of the ACLU of Connecticut, intervened after he talked with a woman who was not permitted to vote with a credit card and was required to return with a driver's license. The moderator agreed that she should have been allowed to vote with the credit card and said he would so instruct the poll workers.
- In Farmington, poll workers at one polling place insisted to a local reporter that photo identification is always required to vote. At another polling place in Farmington, voters reported being able to vote with other forms of identification.
- In Sharon, an email from the town in advance of the election said "please bring photo identification."

We also received reports of voters being asked for photo ID in East Hampton, Enfield and Stamford but didn't receive enough information to know how those cases were or were not resolved. These accounts didn't come to us as the result of an organized campaign or investigation. They were answers

to a spontaneous request to a fairly small audience and it seems reasonable to assume that they indicate a much larger problem. We simply don't know how many people were disenfranchised by misinformation at the polls, but I think we can agree that even one would be too many.

Connecticut requires extensive documentation at registration or at the first time of voting to ensure that the new voter is who he or she claims to be. We allow several forms of identification at the polling place for the very good reason that many people don't have government-issued photo identification because they don't drive or hold a passport. Studies show that most of these people are elderly, poor or members of minority groups. Census data show that 23 percent of households in Bridgeport have no access to a motor vehicle and therefore members of those households have no reason to have a license; the figure is 27 percent in New Haven and 39 percent in Hartford.¹ Nationwide, the Brennan Institute for Justice estimates that 11 percent of citizens who are eligible to vote lack photo identification.² That's why allowing local poll workers to impose a photo ID requirement in contravention of our law threatens the right to vote.

Fortunately, the solution is simple. Posting identification requirements in polling places could have easily solved most of the examples I provided earlier. A voter could simply read the rules and point them out to the poll workers. You can fix this before the 2014 election, in time for the important constitutional questions that will be on the ballot regarding early voting. And clarifying the secretary of the state's authority to set guidelines for the correct and consistent application of election laws will help prevent this kind of problem in the future.

Thank you for this opportunity to urge you to support this important legislation.

¹ <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

² http://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/Democracy/VRE/Challenge_of_Obtaining_Voter_ID.pdf