March 17, 2005

Members of the House of Representatives
Indiana General Assembly
Indiana State House
Indianapolis, IN 46202

Dear Representative:

The League of Women Voters of Indiana strongly encourages you to vote against SB 483, the legislation that would require voters to show at the polls a picture identification issued by Indiana or the federal government. This legislation will turn back forty years of efforts to enable and encourage more citizens to participate in the electoral process.

People who are young and physically active and who have adequate financial means sometimes cannot imagine the limitations imposed by age or blindness or wheelchair dependency or poverty. They may look at this legislation and not see any problem because they already possess a driver’s license or a passport. However, for many voters, obtaining this identification will be a significant barrier to voting. The expense of getting to the BMV may be prohibitive; finding someone to take them may be impossible; obtaining their birth certificate may be expensive and difficult. If they have already experienced barriers at the polls, they may decide that this added hindrance to voting may be too much to overcome.

The League believes that voting is a fundamental right in the United States, and that citizens should be encouraged to exercise that right. Although integrity of the election process is important and must be protected, SB 483 does not address problems that have been recently documented in the electoral system in Indiana. Instead it will exclude many people from voting because of their age or physical condition or poverty. If this legislation passes, Indiana will once again be seen as a regressive place that restricts the ballot box to only the privileged.

Sincerely,

LEAGUE of WOMEN VOTERS of INDIANA

Edith C. Dallinger
President