TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE
THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS
EIGHTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE
(COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE SENATE)
AUSTIN, TEXAS

IN RE: CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL 14

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE SENATE
TUESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2011

BE IT REMEMBERED THAT AT 8:05 a.m., on Tuesday, the 25th day of January 2011, the above-entitled matter continued at the Texas State Capitol, Senate Chamber, Austin, Texas, before the Committee of the Whole Senate. The following proceedings were reported by Aloma J. Kennedy, Lorrie A. Schnoor and Kim Pence, Certified Shorthand Reporters.
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affirmed, both in the court case and the Department of Justice? That was my question. Do you have any concern that we will have done all of this debate and work, and certainly to ensure the ballot security, only to be shut down at the Department of Justice, because we are a Section 5 state and what we’re offering in your bill is not something that has been approved by the Department of Justice?

SEN. FRASER: I have no concern about Senate Bill 14, both going before the U.S. Supreme Court or going before the Department of Justice.

SEN. VAN de PUTTE: Thank you, Senator Fraser. I wanted to ask a little bit of your thinking. And in the bill that you have before us, the student identifications were omitted from your list of acceptable documentation. And could you give me the rationale why a student photo identification is not acceptable form of identification?

SEN. FRASER: The types of identification we’ve included are one from a government entity that would identify that person as who they are, that they say they are, they’re a valid voter and a citizen of the United States, and these are the ones that we have suggested that would be acceptable.

SEN. VAN de PUTTE: So the rationale for
not having student identification cards on the list, since you omitted them, is because they aren't issued by a governmental entity?

SEN. FRASER: I didn't say that.

SEN. VAN de PUTTE: I'm sorry. Can you repeat your answer.

SEN. FRASER: I said I did not say that.

SEN. VAN de PUTTE: So why were the student identifications -- you explained that the student identifications were omitted from the list of acceptable documentation, because it was not a government entity.

SEN. FRASER: The four types of identification that we are offering up we believe are less confusing, they're simpler for both voters and election voters. Everyone knows what they look like. There is a standardization of those, and they all look alike and it would be less confusing for the systems who are accepting the voter IT.

SEN. VAN de PUTTE: And, Senator Fraser, one of the provisions in your bill also omits birth certificates from the list of acceptable forms of identification, even though that does come from government entities. And so why is it that birth certificates were omitted?
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SEN. FRASER: Photo ID.

SEN. VAN de PUTTE: So only a photo identification. So they would have to --

SEN. FRASER: The acceptable photo IDs that are outlined in the bill would be an acceptable form, yes.

SEN. VAN de PUTTE: Senator Fraser, do you know right now in the State of Texas, we're able to cast provisional ballots? That's correct, isn't it?

SEN. FRASER: I'm sorry. Ask that again.

SEN. VAN de PUTTE: Current election law allows Texas voters to cast a provisional ballot. Is that correct?

SEN. FRASER: I'm sorry. That is another question I think you should ask the Secretary of State. It is my belief that, but I'm sorry, I don't want to answer that. You can, if you don't mind, ask the Secretary of State.

SEN. VAN de PUTTE: Thank you, Senator.

Since it's based on Indiana law, do you believe that the State of Texas has a greater minority population than the State of Indiana?

SEN. FRASER: I'm not advised.

SEN. VAN de PUTTE: To your knowledge, have any studies been done to determine if there has
been, under current Texas voter laws, any impact that it would have on affected class of Latino and African-American voters?

    SEN. FRASER: The bill that I'm laying out today is a model that has been approved by the U.S. Supreme Court, it has been precleared by the Department of Justice in Georgia. It will deter fraud. We're providing free access of cards. And, yes, we believe this will protect confidence in election in making sure only eligible voters are counted.

    SEN. VAN de PUTTE: Senator Fraser, on the availability of free identification cards, is there a means test, or what sort of proof do citizens have to give to the Department of Public Safety to be able to get a free identification card under your bill?

    SEN. FRASER: The Department of Public Safety is here as a resources witness. Senator Williams is also here. That's his area of expertise. If you have a question about that, if you would like, I will yield to Senator Williams now or you can wait and ask the DPS when it comes up.

    SEN. VAN de PUTTE: Well, right now the DPS I don't think gives free IDs. But in your bill, what sort of process or documentation can voters use to get a free identification card, in your bill? What are
second of the Secretary of State.

SEN. DAVIS: Well, I'm asking you as the bill's author. Are you concerned that there will be an impact to those people who currently cannot fill out Section 8 but can only fill out the attestation clause in Section 9?

SEN. FRASER: And again, you're making a reference to Section 8 that -- you know, I'm sorry. I don't -- I'm not -- I don't know what you're referring to. The Secretary of State is the expert in that area. And when you ask that question, I'll be listening and will, you know, listen to the response.

SEN. DAVIS: Earlier you talked about the Executive Director from the Carter-Baker Commission, and you cited a statistic, that only 1.2 percent of Americans would be affected by a requirement that a photo ID be required. Correct?

SEN. FRASER: I did make that reference, yes.

SEN. DAVIS: Are you aware that that was limited to a study of only three states, and Texas was not one of them?

SEN. FRASER: Yes, because at that time the Carter-Baker was looking at the states that had issued a photo ID.
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SEN. DAVIS: And would you agree that it may be the case that if I live in one of those three states and it's easier for me to get a driver's license in that state, then I may have a lower percentage of citizens who don't have a photo ID than another state might have where it's more difficult to get a driver's license?

SEN. FRASER: I'm not advised.

SEN. DAVIS: Are you aware that even in those states, in the 1.2 percentage number, there was a disparate impact that was found on elderly and women and African-Americans in terms of people who actually had the eligible photo ID that's counted in that percentage?

SEN. FRASER: I'm not advised.

SEN. DAVIS: Does it concern you at all that the bill that we are looking at today, the bill that you filed, might have a disparate impact on women, minorities and senior citizens, possibly disabled people in the State of Texas?

SEN. FRASER: The bill that we're filing today I believe will be approved by the U.S. Supreme Court, and also the bill in Georgia was precleared by the Justice Department. So I believe our bill will comply with both of those.

SEN. DAVIS: Okay. Well, I'm going to
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read to you from the Supreme Court opinion, the U.S. Supreme Court opinion when it was reviewing the Indiana law.

They acknowledged that there is evidence in the record, in fact, of which we may take judicial notice that indicates that a somewhat heavier burden may be placed on a limited number of persons by virtue of the photo ID requirement. They include elderly persons born out of state, persons who, because of economic or other personal limitations, may find it difficult either to secure a copy of their birth certificate or to assemble the other required documentation to obtain a state-issued ID, homeless persons and persons with a religious objection to being photographed.

"If we assume, as the evidence suggests, that some members of these classes were registered voters when the Indiana law was enacted, the new identification requirement may have imposed a special burden on their right to vote. The severity of that burden is, of course, mitigated by the fact that if eligible voters without photo ID may cast provisional ballots, that will ultimately be counted."

Are you aware that in the State of Indiana, I can cast a provisional ballot, and the Supreme Court made its decision in terms of whether the
burden was constitutionally acceptable, based on the fact in Indiana, I can cast a provisional ballot, and if I attest to the fact that I'm unable to pay for the cost of getting the underlying documents to receive a photo ID, that I do not, in voting my provisional ballot, have to show a photo ID?

SEN. FRASER: Senator, my observation is that what you've read from the Supreme Court opinion is a portion of it, but it's a snippet. And it also continues to say that these do not present an undue burden for the person to vote.

SEN. DAVIS: That's correct. They said they did not believe that it created a constitutionally prohibited burden, based on the fact that voters in the State of Indiana have the opportunity to vote a provisional ballot even if they don't have a photo ID, if they can show that they were unable to get one, either because of their circumstances as an elderly person or because they're indigent. Does your bill provide a special exception for people under those circumstances to vote a provisional ballot?

SEN. FRASER: The bill that I'm moving forward I believe will be approved by the U.S. Supreme Court and will be precleared by the Department of Justice.
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SEN. DAVIS: Okay. Let's look at the things that are required in your bill in terms of a photo ID. And I appreciate what you said earlier. I think it's true. I think if you ask anybody on the street that you might walk up to at this moment in time whether they think it's a good idea for someone to show a photo ID in order to vote, they would probably agree. What they might not understand in agreeing with that, though, are what the requirements are going to be in the State of Texas in order for them to comply with that particular requirement, and they also might not appreciate the challenge and the difficulty that some people may have in supplying that.

SEN. FRASER: Senator, this is not rocket science. The people of your district understand very clearly that when they walk into that voting booth, they have to show a photo ID proving they are who they say they are. The people in Fort Worth, that area, I have the polling data -- I believe the number is about -- around 90 percent. And of that, that's Republicans and Democrats. So I believe the people that elected you, sent you down here, have said, "We believe that when you go in to vote, you should show identification to prove you are who you say you are." It's a very, very simple concept.
SEN. DAVIS: Are you aware that in the Indiana law and also in the Georgia law, people are allowed to come and vote with a state-issued student ID if they're attending a state university?

SEN. FRASER: I'm not advised.

SEN. DAVIS: And your bill does not allow that kind of a photo ID to be used. Is that correct?

SEN. FRASER: We have four forms of ID that we have laid out as acceptable. Those are all recognized acceptable forms of identification that we have recommended.

SEN. DAVIS: And it does not include that, for the record. Are you also aware that in the Indiana law and in the Georgia law, the ID can be expired and still be utilized, but under the requirements in your bill, that cannot occur?

SEN. FRASER: You know, I think our belief is that someone should have a valid ID that has not expired. "Expired" implies it is not valid, and we in Texas believe you should have a valid ID.

SEN. DAVIS: What will I do if my driver's license expires the day before I go to vote and I'm not aware of it until I show up at the polling place?

SEN. FRASER: And I would ask you, what would happen if you were driving to the polling place
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with an invalid driver's license? What would happen?

SEN. DAVIS: I would get a ticket, but I
wouldn't be denied my constitutional right to vote as a
legal citizen of the United States.

SEN. FRASER: You would not be denied your
right to vote. Under this law and under this bill, as
you know, if you walk in with an invalid driver's
license, you would be allowed to vote. It would be a
provision vote, and you would be allowed six days to go
back to the place that issues driver's license, get a
valid license and come back, and your vote would be
counted.

SEN. DAVIS: Well, we had a conversation
about that earlier in terms of how difficult and
challenging -- for some people it actually is -- to be
able to comply with that requirement. But let me ask
you for a moment, if I bring in a state-issued Texas
driver's license and it expired 30 days ago or 60 days
ago or a year ago, how does that fail to prove that I'm
the person on the card, simply because it has expired?

SEN. FRASER: Well, I would ask you the
same question. If your driver's license expired 30 days
ago, is it acceptable to the patrolman that just stopped
you? It's expired.

SEN. DAVIS: I'm asking you the question.
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1 The reason that we are advocating or you are advocating
2 for photo ID is so that the person who is receiving my
3 ballot can verify that I am the person casting it.
4 Correct?
5
6 SEN. FRASER: Yes.
7
8 SEN. DAVIS: And if my driver's license is
9 expired but it's a state-issued driver's license and it
10 has my name and it has my picture on it and my name
11 matches what's on the registrar's -- the precinct rolls,
12 how does that fail to prove that I'm who I am?
13
14 SEN. FRASER: I think we go back to the
15 word "valid," do you have a valid Texas driver's
16 license?
17
18 SEN. DAVIS: How does it fail to prove
19 that I am who I am?
20
21 SEN. FRASER: You don't have a valid Texas
22 driver's license.
23
24 SEN. DAVIS: And as I said earlier, in
25 Georgia and in Indiana, under the laws that were deemed
26 acceptable by the Supreme Court and the courts in
27 Georgia received preclearance by the Department of
28 Justice, each of those allows some acceptance of expired
29 IDs.
30
31 I want to talk a little bit about how
32 difficult is, because I really think every one of us
SEN. WEST: Were you finished?

SEN. FRASER: Yeah.

SEN. WEST: Okay. Now, the question, though, that I asked, not -- and I agree with you that most people will say that some form of photo ID is okay. Now --

SEN. FRASER: But what --

SEN. WEST: Let me -- let me finish. Let me finish, though. Hold on for a second.

I would agree with you that, but my question wasn't about their opinion. My question was: Have you conducted any research on how burdens of photo ID requirements may fall disproportionately on racial minorities?

SEN. FRASER: And I think the answer to that, if you look at what happened in Indiana and Georgia is a good example because it is a Section 5 state. In those states, to our -- to my knowledge, there has not been a single person that has came forward to identify themself that they were in any way, you know, in -- you know, kept from voting or inconvenienced by voting.

So the answer to your question is, that I look at the data that has been collected from the states that have implemented, and they're coming forward. That
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is the case. Plus the fact that if you ask African
Americans or Hispanics in Texas, it's a very
straightforward question. When you have 82 percent of
the public, the people that you represent, saying, you
know, "I think that's a good ideal," I'm having a lot of
trouble understanding how -- why you don't understand
that.

SEN. WEST: Okay. So the answer to my
question is, is that you did not conduct any type of
research on it other than looked at opinion polls and
referenced what went on in other states?

SEN. FRASER: No, we've done all --
there's been a lot of research done.

SEN. WEST: And that's what I was asking.
What research have you done --

SEN. FRASER: I just explained --

SEN. WEST: -- to make that determination?

SEN. FRASER: -- to you what we did. We
have looked at the experience of other states. And
you're going to have witnesses come from some of the
other affected states, and you're going to be able to
ask that question: Who has came forward in your state
and said it's a problem?

SEN. WEST: Okay. So you're saying, then,
that as a result of experiences in other states and an
opinion poll, that that is the sum total of the research
that's been done by you in preparation of this bill?

SEN. FRASER: Senator, I think the people
in your district understand very clearly. If you ask
them a direct question, someone you represent, and said,
"Do you favor or oppose requiring a valid photo ID
before you're allowed to vote," this is -- that's not
rocket science.

SEN. WEST: Well, the --

SEN. FRASER: "Should you be required to
show your picture ID when you go into vote?" That's --
that's -- to me, that's -- that's, you know, pretty
telling.

SEN. WEST: Well, the great thing about it
is, we're going to have an opportunity to do just that.
Because guess what? I've got a few people from my
district down here to testify, so you'll have an
opportunity to ask them that. Okay?

SEN. FRASER: Good.

SEN. WEST: But, again, that's the sum
total of your research, though. Right?

SEN. FRASER: I didn't say that was the
sum total of my research.

SEN. WEST: Now, would you agree that
Tennessee has a larger proportion of minorities than
Indiana?

SEN. FRASER: Not advised.

SEN. WEST: So if -- if the demographic information that we have from the U.S. Department of Census indicated that, you would not disagree with that. Correct?

SEN. FRASER: Well, I mean, every state has a different demographic of the makeup of people within the state.

SEN. WEST: Sure. I know that, yeah.

SEN. FRASER: Georgia is a -- you know, they're -- they're a Section 5 voter rights state, but their makeup is not exactly like Texas.

SEN. WEST: That's the point. That's what I'm asking you. You said you weren't advised, so I was just trying to point to you some set of facts that all of us commonly know that we get from the Department of Census, U.S. Department of Census. And if they give different demographic information for the states, then that would probably be controlling, and you would agree that that's the best evidence that we have of what the population is in those various states. That's all I'm asking. Now, let me ask this.

SEN. FRASER: But you're trying to answer my question, and I did not say that.
SEN. WEST: No, I'm not. But are the forms of identification listed in your bill the least restrictive options in order to achieve the goal of avoiding what you call voter identification fraud?

SEN. FRASER: Okay. You're going to have to ask that again.

SEN. WEST: Are the forms of identification that you've listed in the bill the least restrictive options in order to achieve the goal of avoiding what you have said is voter identification fraud?

SEN. FRASER: And I think what you're asking, which is going to be the easiest to use? And the -- the data, if you look back at 2006, the number of people that have registered to vote, about -- I think the number now is 91 percent actually use their driver's license when they registered to vote. So the assumption is at least 91 percent of the people that voted -- or that registered since 2006 had a driver's license. So I'd say that's the -- if it's the -- the easiest thing, I'd say a driver's license.

SEN. WEST: So this -- the list of identifications that you use as the -- is the least restrictive options that you could come up with?

SEN. FRASER: Well, I don't -- I'm not
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sure. Your verbiage you're using, I don't know that
that's the intent.

SEN. WEST: Well --

SEN. FRASER: I'm saying that the thing
that the -- the type of identification that is most
readily available appears to be a driver's license.

It -- we think, that is.

SEN. WEST: Okay. Now, since there are
studies that show that African Americans and Hispanics
are more affected by poverty and --

SEN. FRASER: Ask him, then.

We're trying to figure out if this is a
filibuster.

SEN. WEST: Is it a what?

SEN. FRASER: A filibuster?

SEN. WEST: Oh, no, this is serious
business. This is serious business.

SEN. FRASER: I guess I would remind you
that the information that was put into the record this
morning by Senator Huffman, the questions you've gone
over, I believe we put these --

SEN. WEST: Well, at any -- at any point,

you can defer to whomever you want to answer the
question.

SEN. FRASER: No, no, I'm saying --
SEN. WEST: You've been referring to the Secretary of State.

SEN. FRASER: -- these -- the questions -- the questions you're asking, the question and the answer are already in the record from two years ago; that you're asking the exact same question, and I'm answering the exact same answer. It's already in the --

SEN. WEST: And it may very well be. I just don't remember. I haven't gone back and read that entire record. It was like 26 hours. So if I'm being a little bit redundant, please give me -- give me a little space on that.

Let me go back to the questions I'm asking. Studies have shown that African Americans and Hispanics are more affected by poverty and, therefore, are more likely to participate in government benefit programs. Will the elimination of the government documents as a form of ID disproportionately affect African Americans and Hispanics?

SEN. FRASER: I'm not advised.

SEN. WEST: Okay. If in fact -- well, let me back up and ask you this question.

Do you agree that African Americans and Hispanics are disproportionately affected by poverty in the state of Texas?
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SEN. FRASER: Not advised.

SEN. WEST: Okay. Do you --

SEN. FRASER: I grew up in a pretty poor family, so --

SEN. WEST: Well, that's what I know, and correct me if I'm wrong because we've had our conversations. Your father was a minister, too. Right?

SEN. FRASER: Minister and --

SEN. WEST: Okay. He went to a lot of African American churches?

SEN. FRASER: Yes, he did.

SEN. WEST: Did a little singing and stuff like that?

SEN. FRASER: Yes.

SEN. WEST: Okay. And do you represent a district that has a high poverty level -- or excuse me -- a high ethnic minority population?

SEN. FRASER: Interestingly -- well, and what you call high, it is not one of the highest percentage wise of ethnic minority. But the last figure I was shown, my district is the third poorest district in the state, right behind Senator Uresti's. That that -- that number is a couple of year's old, but I'm -- you know, the --

SEN. WEST: Okay.
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SEN. FRASER: -- people in my district are -- are the working poor.

SEN. WEST: Okay. The -- the protected classes, that would be an African American and Hispanics, do you have a high concentration of African Americans and Hispanics in your district?

SEN. FRASER: Well, I don't know what you'll call a high percentage. I've got --

SEN. WEST: Okay. Comparatively speaking.

SEN. FRASER: There -- there are a lot of my voters in my district that, you know, I'm -- I love to say "my constituents" -- that are African American or Hispanic.

SEN. WEST: Are they in poverty or what? I mean, you know what poverty is.

SEN. FRASER: Well, Senator, if --

SEN. WEST: Oh.

SEN. FRASER: If I have the third poorest district in the state, that implies that we have some people that are working poor.

SEN. WEST: Let me just ask you this question.

Do you know whether or not the elimination of the government documents that have hereto before been utilized by voters for identification purposes at the
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polls --

SEN. FRASER: Issued before?

SEN. WEST: Yeah, I mean, under current law. Let me back up, then.

Based on current law and the various government identifications that can be used for purposes of voting, by eliminating those, whether they have an adverse impact on ethnic minorities in the state?

SEN. FRASER: Let me -- let me tell you that the people in my district voted -- or they're polling that they -- 92 percent of them say that they're in favor of this -- this requirement.

SEN. WEST: Okay. So you don't -- and that's your response to my question?

SEN. FRASER: My response is, is that I think the people of the state of Texas, which makes up -- I think it was 83 percent of -- of African Americans and 85 percent of Hispanics, said that they're in favor of it. I'm sorry. It's 82 percent Hispanic -- I'm sorry -- Hispanic, 80 -- 83 percent Hispanic, the African American, which is -- it's listed as a black vote, is 82 percent say they are in favor of asking for a photo ID.

So it's -- it's -- this is a pretty easy question for them, "Should you have to show your -- your
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photo ID, your driver's license, when you come in to vote?" And they said, "Sure. That's" -- you know, "That's fair."

SEN. WEST: And that's your response to my question?

SEN. FRASER: Yes.

SEN. WEST: Okay. No more questions at this time.

SEN. FRASER: Thank you, Senator.

CHAIRMAN DUNCAN: Chair recognizes Senator Lucio for questions.

SEN. LUCIO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Fraser, under this legislation, there are no exceptions at all if you do not have a driver's license -- and correct me if I'm wrong -- military ID, citizenship certificates, or passports.

Now, not even Senate IDs are appropriate for the purposes of voting. That means the state employee working in the building wishing to cast a ballot during early voting at the Sam Houston Building couldn't use a combination of their voter registration card and their Senate ID. Further, this bill's requirements for identification are stronger than what's used for new employees in obtaining driver's license, the way we understand it.
SEN. FRASER: -- of the ballot, making
sure that the person that is trying to vote is who they
represent to be.

SEN. ELLIS: And if that's the case, why
wouldn't you apply a voter -- photo voter identification
requirement to mail-in ballots? Don't you think there's
probably room for more fraud for the mail-in ballots?

SEN. FRASER: I will support you a hundred
percent. You file that bill, you come forward with it,
and we'll talk about it. But this bill does not in any
way address mail-in ballots. This is only in-person
voter --

SEN. ELLIS: But you -- but you will
concede that there's probably room, just from a
layperson's perspective? Neither you nor I are experts
on it, and I'm just asking you to make the point. Will
you concede that there's room -- there's potential for
more fraud with a mail-in ballot than with somebody
showing up?

SEN. FRASER: I'm going to concede that
the bill that I'm laying out today will help a lot with
the in-person, you know, potential of fraud, and it will
make sure the person there is -- is who they say they
are.

SEN. ELLIS: If you just had to guess,
to accomplish. Is that right?

SEN. FRASER: Yes.

SEN. WILLIAMS: The other thing that I wanted to correct, for the record, Senator Watson opined earlier that a lot of this funding for these items had been struck in the budget, and actually, I went back and pulled a copy of the budget. I had not looked at this part, and so there were some budget riders that had expired and that were no longer relevant in the current budget. Those were struck. And under Strategy B.1.4, under elections improvement, administer Federal Help America Vote Act, we actually have, it looks like, a total of about $43 million over the next biennium that's been appropriated in the budget that Senator Ogden laid out for us earlier. So I just wanted to clear that up for the record because that's kind of been a moving target.

Another question that I had for you was the -- I wanted to go back, if I could, and -- and just touch on what my understanding after hearing all this questioning that's gone on, what your -- the purpose of your bill is -- really is to deter and detect fraud in-person voter fraud at the polls. Is that correct?

SEN. FRASER: That is correct.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Okay. And has the United
SEN. WILLIAMS: So a year from now. So we've got a lot of time to let these people know what's coming.

And then the other thing I've heard a lot about is current law, and, you know, there's been a lot of discussion. In fact, a lot of what we've talked about is what's actually on the books right now, and your bill is not touching any of that top side or bottom. Really, most of what you do is very limited by changing what the requirements are when you come to the polls. Is that correct? There's not any other real substantive change to election law here.

SEN. FRASER: We're only addressing the -- the actual in-person voting and the identification required when somebody votes in person. We're not addressing mail-in ballots or any of the other provisions. It's just that one section.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Well, thank you for allowing me to question you about this and I appreciate you bringing this issue before us and I especially appreciate the fortitude that you've shown during this long debate. Thank you.

SEN. FRASER: Thank you, Senator.

CHAIRMAN DUNCAN: Chair recognizes Senator Shapiro.