

StarTribune.com | MINNEAPOLIS - ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

GOP legislators want photo IDs for voting in Minnesota

By **JAKE GROVUM**jake.grovum@startribune.com, jake.grovum@startribune.com

January 26, 2009

House and Senate Republicans on Monday announced a renewed push for legislation that would require all Minnesota voters to have a photo ID before casting a ballot.

The bill's chief House sponsor, Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Delano, called the issue a "matter of integrity in our elections."

"This is not a partisan issue," he said at a State Capitol news conference, flanked by supporters with signs reading "Don't trash my vote" and "Restore trust." Emmer added that if someone needs an ID for everyday activities, voting shouldn't be any different.

But critics say the bill would only put up more hurdles for voters and increase the chances of disenfranchisement. They say that instances of voter fraud are virtually nonexistent and that legislation requiring a voter ID is unnecessary.

The bill would provide free voting-only ID cards for those who need them and a process for casting provisional ballots if a voter couldn't provide a photo ID on Election Day.

Republicans likened the measure to Indiana's voter ID law, which the U.S. Supreme Court upheld last April in a 6-3 ruling.

Unnecessary added burden?

Constitutional or not, Rep. Phyllis Kahn said she's opposed to requiring a voter to show a photo ID. She called it an "added burden" that's unnecessary, especially without evidence of fraud. "It's one of these things that's a solution searching for a problem," said Kahn, DFL-Minneapolis.

However, Rep. Mary Kiffmeyer, R-Big Lake, said the legislation could help stave off problems like voter fraud before they ever reach final vote tallies or before the first instance of fraud is reported.

Minnesota is more vulnerable to election problems without this legislation, added Kiffmeyer, a former secretary of state.

"Let's make the whole process work," she said. "We owe the people of this state to address these problems up front."

In another proposal, Sen. Mike Jungbauer said Monday he'll offer legislation under which statewide recounts would be done by machine with a possibility for a runoff election.

Jungbauer, R-East Bethel, said the legislation would address some of the issues that have come up in the Senate race between Republican Norm Coleman and DFLer Al Franken.

Machines would do recount

Instead of a close statewide race triggering an automatic hand recount, ballots would be counted again using the optical scan machines. If the recount overturned the results from Election Day and the difference between the vote totals was less than one-half of 1 percent, then a runoff election would be held.

Jungbauer says his bill would also make sure only the votes cast and counted on Election Day would be part of the recount.

The Associated Press contributed to this report. Jake Grovum is a University of Minnesota student on assignment for the Star Tribune.

© 2009 Star Tribune. All rights reserved.