



Asian & Pacific Islander American Vote- Michigan

Statement Regarding Michigan HB 5060

November 21, 2011

Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote – Michigan is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that serves the Asian and Pacific Islander American (APIA) community through civic participation, advocacy, and education. At 2.97% of Michigan’s population, our state’s 293,766 APIAs¹ are the fastest-growing population while other populations are declining.

Our mission is to serve the APIA community through civic participation, advocacy, and education. In our relatively short history, we have registered approximately 1500 individuals to vote, the vast majority from the APIA community. The APIA community faces many challenges to participating in our country’s democracy – language barriers, lack of familiarity with the political process, and, sometimes, distrust of government due to the history of home country political corruption.

For that reason, APIA community voter registration rates tend to hover around 50-60 percent, significantly lower than that of other communities. Once registered, APIA voters do turn out to vote at high rates. It is clear removing barriers to the voting process is imperative among the APIA community. Now, House Bill 5060 has been introduced in Michigan. This piece of legislation makes it harder to engage residents in the democratic process more difficult by requiring no reason absentee voters to pick up their ballot in person with state identification.

Currently, the following populations are exempt from this requirement and can receive their ballot by mail or online— those 60 or older, expect to be away while polls are open, are physically unable to get to the polls, in jail awaiting arraignment or trial, can’t attend for religious reasons, or will be working as a election official in another precinct.

Eleven percent of Americans surveyed do not have government-issued photo ID.² Those without photo ID are disproportionately the elderly, students, women, people with disabilities, low-income people and people of color.

In the 2004 Current Population Survey, registered Asian American voters were 8.5 percent less likely to say that they voted in states requiring a form of identification to vote compared to states where one only must give one’s name.

Most other states already allow no reason absentee voting for all voters by mail or online. Additionally, claims that no reason absentee voting increases voter fraud is unfounded. House Bill 5060 fundamentally limits the very purpose of expanding no reason absentee voting to all voters by maintaining preferential treatment to a select few who may apply by mail or online.

¹ Includes Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander – both alone and multiracial. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010.

² “Citizens without proof: Survey of Americans’ possession of documentary proof of citizenship and photo identification,” Brennan Center for Justice, November 2006.

House Bill 5060 goes against what the United States stands for by creating barriers to involvement in democracy for marginalized communities across the state. APIAVote-Michigan stands against unnecessary impediments to a constitutional right for all citizens.

The state of Michigan would be better served and represented by bills that support the democratic process rather than those that create barriers to equitable participation.

For more information about APIAVote-Michigan, visit www.apiavotemi.org.

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