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Goddard: Voters need not show ID

By Howard Fischer
CAPITOL MEDIA SERVICES

PHOENIX - Arizona's attorney general has blocked the state from requiring identification from voters in the state's first election since voters approved Proposition 200 in November.

In a letter to Secretary of State Jan Brewer, Attorney General Terry Goddard said the rules crafted by Brewer to comply with the new law do not adequately accommodate people who may not have the kind of ID that the regulations require. He expressed particular concern that Indians living in rural areas cannot produce what Brewer said is necessary: identification with a street address.

That's not the only problem.

Goddard also stressed the need for a procedure to deal with voters who show up at the polls without the required identification and request a "provisional" ballot - one that is counted only if later verified as having been cast by a registered voter.

Proposition 200 requires not only proof of citizenship to register but also says people must present identification before being given a ballot.

The accepted forms of identification include a photo ID with the name and address of the voter or two different forms of identification with the name and address of the individual if no picture ID is available.

Voting has begun

With early voting already under way in several local elections scheduled for March 8, Brewer said Thursday that she was disappointed by Goddard's decision.

"It was my goal to get this implemented and deliver to the people what they voted on," she said. "My office has spent hundreds of hours since last November working with counties and citizen community leaders to put into practice these new voting requirements."

Kathy McKee, who helped craft Proposition 200, said she was "shocked and disgusted" with Goddard. She said Goddard, who opposed the initiative, is doing the bidding of others who never wanted the measure to take effect in the first place.

"It's the sore losers again trying to subvert the will of the people," she said.

But in Pima County, where elections are scheduled for March 8 in South Tucson, Marana, Sahuarita and the Metropolitan Water District, Goddard's decision was cheered by Recorder F. Ann Rodriguez, who said Brewer's proposals would have disenfranchised many Arizonans.

Rodriguez said reservation residents would be particularly hard hit since few have a street address. Instead, their identification cards - even those issued by county election officials - use things like a distance from a landmark, such as a windmill, a road or a wash.

Acceptable forms of ID

- Proposed by Secretary of State Jan Brewer:

Acceptable identification with photo ID, name and address

- Arizona driver's license
- Arizona nonoperating identification card
- Tribal enrollment card
- Government-issued identification

Acceptable identification without photo ID, name and address (two required):

- Utility bill
- Bank statement
- Arizona vehicle registration
- Payroll check or direct-deposit receipt
- Indian census card
- Tribal enrollment card
- Certificate of naturalization
- Government-issued identification

Vivian Juan-Saunders, chairwoman of the Tohono O'odham Nation, said Goddard's action will provide some breathing room to try to work out a solution.

One option, she said, might be for the tribe itself to find a way to assign addresses to all residents. Those could then be included on various official documents that reservation residents would then be able to present at the polls.

Goddard said the problem could be fixed, at least in part, by amending the law to say that those without proper ID are entitled to a provisional ballot.

But Christopher Roads, Pima County's voter-registration director, said such a solution "is about 99.9 percent not possible."

Feds must OK changes

Getting the Legislature to act in time for the March 8 elections is just one hurdle. Changes to the law also would have to be approved by the U.S. Department of Justice before it could be implemented, Roads said.

The Justice Department can take up to 60 days after receiving the changes to the measure to act.

That means no one will be asked for identification when they go to the polls in March.

McKee said she doesn't believe changing the law is necessary, but she will not oppose Goddard if he pushes for an adjustment.

Brewer said provisional ballots are "one of the answers" to the problem.

It could prove costly, however, since it would require counties to hire additional people to compare the signatures on the provisional ballots with those on voter-registration rolls, she said.

Rodriguez said provisional ballots are not a real solution. Instead, she said, there needs to be a way for those who show up at the polls who cannot produce cards with a street address to cast a regular ballot.

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