

INTERFAITH CONFERENCE OF GREATER MILWAUKEE

Founded 1970

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May 10, 2011

For Immediate Release

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American Baptist Churches of
Wisconsin

Church of God in Christ,
Wisconsin First Jurisdiction

Episcopal Church,
Diocese of Milwaukee

Evangelical Lutheran Church in
America,
Greater Milwaukee Synod

Islamic Society of Milwaukee

Jewish Community Relations
Council

Milwaukee Jewish Federation

Presbyterian Church (USA),
Presbytery of Milwaukee

Religious Society of Friends,
The Milwaukee Meeting

Roman Catholic Church,
The Milwaukee Archdiocese

Unitarian Universalist Churches,
Southeastern Wisconsin Association

United Church of Christ,
Southeastern Wisconsin Association

United Methodist Church,
Metro North & South Districts

Wisconsin Council of Rabbis

Wisconsin General Baptist
State Convention

Interfaith Statement on Voter ID Legislation

The Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee has brought leaders and adherents of different faiths together since 1970 to work for the common good by upholding the dignity of every person, especially the poor and the powerless. When they cannot speak for themselves, we strive to be their voice and a voice of moral conscience.

We cannot now sit idle while legislative changes are being considered that would limit the ability of the unemployed, the working poor and others to express themselves at polling places. While the ongoing legislative process has preserved some important features – such as Election Day registration and absentee ballots for any reason – it continues to propose a photo ID requirement that would be an unnecessary impediment to many low-income people along with elderly or disabled people who live in their own homes. And the restrictions it places on the use of college IDs for voting would unfairly disenfranchise many students.

On the surface, it may not seem unreasonable to say that those without driver's licenses can simply obtain a free photo ID from the state. But the reality is more troubling. Statewide, low-income people move more often than other people and struggle to meet basic needs, including the transportation necessary to get new or updated IDs. In Milwaukee's central city, where unemployment is extremely high, more than half of adult African Americans and adult Hispanics do not have a valid driver's license. Budget cutbacks are affecting the availability, frequency and cost of the public transportation they would need to obtain state IDs. Meanwhile cutbacks in social services are adding to family pressures. All of that makes civic engagement more difficult. All of that weakens the fabric of our democratic society.

At such a time, it is not unreasonable to ask why impose changes – changes that will cost the state millions of dollars and limit, rather than broaden access to the polls – when there has been no evidence of significant voter fraud? There may be a belief that such fraud exists, but action on belief alone is not good public policy. It would be better to devote some funds to research and verification, and have more faith in a democratic process that engages as many citizens as possible.

“To uphold the dignity of every person and the solidarity of the human community”