



**Testimony of Becky Straus, Legislative Director
In Support of HJM 8
House Committee on Rules
April 10, 2013**

Chair Garrett and Members of the Committee:

I apologize that I have a committee conflict and am unable to testify before you this afternoon. Thank you for your consideration of this written testimony in support of HJM 8.

Nothing is more fundamental to our democracy than the right to vote; indeed, it is protected by more constitutional amendments—the 1st, 14th, 15th, 19th, 24th, and 26th—than any other right we enjoy as Americans. But the fundamental right to cast a ballot was under attack across the country.

Across the country, hundreds of bills have been introduced in recent sessions, all designed to burden voters' rights. Examples include:

- Requiring government-issued photo ID to vote or otherwise restricting the types of acceptable IDs;
- Requiring documentary proof of citizenship when registering to vote;
- Reducing early voting periods;
- Eliminating Election Day (sometimes called same day) registration;
- Imposing burdensome regulations on organizations that conduct voter registration drives;
- Attempts to disenfranchise students; and
- Permanently disenfranchising people with felony convictions.

Supporters of these regressive laws claim that such restrictions are necessary to prevent voter fraud, even though virtually no credible threat exists. In fact, a Department of Justice investigation of over 300 million votes cast between 2002 and 2007 uncovered only 86 cases of actual voter fraud.

Furthermore, these suppressive measures disproportionately affect low-income, minority, elderly, disabled, and young voters. Voting rights advocates have estimated that these laws combined will disenfranchise millions of voters nationwide.

HJM 8 is makes a positive statement about the importance of voting rights in our country. We thank Representative Dembrow for bringing it forward and urge your support.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. Again, I apologize that I cannot testify in person today. Please feel free to contact me at any time with questions or comments.