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Why Voter Registration Certificates Have Expired

The Voting Rights Act of 1965¹ outlawed discrimination in voting. Covered jurisdictions² must seek preclearance of voting changes from the US Attorney General (DOJ) or the US District Court and demonstrate that proposed voting changes do not have the effect of discrimination based on race, color or language minority group.

Texas is one of nine states, 54 counties (*in 5 other states*) and 12 townships (*in 2 more*) that is considered a "covered jurisdiction" and, upon submission of a voting change, waits 60 days for a response from the DOJ. If a change is rejected, the jurisdiction continues its earlier practice or adopts a substitute and again seeks preclearance.

How does this affect you? Across Texas, 13M voter certificates expired – 177,000 in Galveston County - because State and County redistricting plans have not received a nod and voting 'entitlements' cannot be defined. A court order requires voter certificates to be mailed by February 13th and establishes a later primary of April 3rd but additional delays are likely.

Also affected? Voter ID. The Secretary of State has recently prepared a response to a request for additional information from the DOJ so the already restarted 60 day clock will again reset. Since the DOJ may make an unlimited number of requests for information, the voter ID clock could continue ticking a long time.

For you as a voter, this means there will be no changes to current ID requirements. Acceptable ID will continue to include a voter registration certificate, driver's license or state issued ID, any other identification with a photograph, birth certificate or similar document, US citizenship papers, US passport, official mail addressed to you by a governmental entity, current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck or other government document that shows your name and address or any other form of identification prescribed by the Secretary of State.

If voter ID is precleared, most voters will be required to present an approved photo ID before being permitted to vote including a Texas driver's license, election ID certificate, TX personal ID or TX Concealed Handgun License (*all issued by DPS*) or a US military photo ID, US Citizenship Certificate with photo or US Passport.

¹ The Voting Rights Act has been renewed and amended by Congress four times and was granted a 25 year extension in 2006 by President George W. Bush.

² States with less than 50% of the voting age population voting in 1960 and/or 1964 were designated covered jurisdictions by the original Act. Some counties and towns since have been added to the listing and several others have 'bailed out' after proving there was no longer a need for preclearance.