January 23, 2014

Chairman Avery and Committee Members
Government Committee
Nebraska Legislature

RE: Opposition to LB 662

Dear Chairman Avery and Committee Members,

My name is Rebecca Gonzales and I am with Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest. We are a non-partisan, non-profit organization that fights for justice and opportunity for all Nebraskans. Today I would like to testify in opposition to LB 662.

Voting is a most fundamental American right and maintaining the integrity of our election process is an important part of our democracy. As guardians of our democratic process, legislators must constantly balance the burdens imposed on the electorate's access to the vote against protecting the integrity of the election process. While we are supportive of seeking ways to improve the accuracy of the voter roles, we believe the burden this bill would impose on the voter is a serious concern that should not go forward, and that in fact the bill may worsen what it seeks to improve.

LB 662 narrows the documentation allowed for verifying the address of an already-registered voter. It requires registered voters to show a government issued photo identification to verify their address if they go to a poll after election officials receive information that the voter's address may have changed. Our current law and federal guidelines allow the use of utility bills, bank statements, government checks, paychecks dated within 60 days prior to presentation as a form of identification in addition to a government ID. This is less burdensome, accomplishes the same goal, and may actually allow for more up-to-date documentation.

This overly onerous voter identification requirement is an attempt to prevent voters from voting at the wrong poll or using the wrong ballot. However, a voter can move and not update their voter registration or driver's license. Voters can show a Nebraska driver's license and there is no way for poll workers to verify that the address on the license is
indeed where the voter currently lives. Students can hold a driver’s license with their parent’s address while living and legally voting in the the precinct where they go to school. LB 662 is also an attempt to increase the accuracy of the voter register, but only those who show up to the poll after the election officials have been notified of a potential move will be required to show identification - potentially far less than the 116,000 the Secretary of State states are currently on the inactive roles. This will do little to help clean the voter register. LB 662 offers little protection to the security of our election system while creating a heavy burden on voters and may impede the rights of qualified voters, a long held Nebraska value and one enshrined in our state constitution. This would put a greater burden on our already over-burdened election workers and undermine our democracy by creating barriers to voting for Nebraska seniors, youth, and those with low incomes or disabilities with little benefit to the integrity of our election system.

I urge you to indefinitely postpone LB 662.

Sincerely,

NEBRASKA APPLESEED

Rebecca Gonzales
Coordinator, Racial Justice & Equal Opportunity Project