

## Voter IDs more complicated than TH says

BY MICHAEL A. MAURO IOWA SECRETARY OF STATE



Michael Mauro, candidate for Iowa Secretary of State. Election tab 2010.

I would like to respond to the Telegraph Herald's Sept. 29 editorial, "Time right for voter IDs."

First let's start with a clarification of my position. In May 2008, I appeared on Iowa Press and was asked whether all voters should be required to provide identification before they are allowed to vote. The position I stated then is the same as my position today.

If the Legislature is willing to adopt a program that provides IDs to voters at no charge, I certainly would not stand in the way. The reality is that some Iowans don't have an ID and I do not believe it is constitutional for states to require individuals to purchase something before they are allowed to exercise their constitutional right to vote.

At the same time, there are a number of important factors we need to consider before such a program can be implemented. Unfortunately, the Telegraph Herald chose to oversimplify, trivialize or simply ignore those issues.

The editorial mockingly cited "harrowing tales of the disenfranchised," but the examples provided are a classic red herring. The Telegraph Herald is missing far more relevant and likely

examples of how an ID program could potentially prevent people

from voting.

How about these tales?

There are more than 3,000 Iowans serving in the military who are currently deployed overseas. Is the paper suggesting that our military men and women, many who serve in imminent danger areas, be required to mail in their identification before their vote will count? As Iowa's commissioner of elections, I won't support such an initiative.

What about the 545,739 Iowans who voted absentee in the 2008 General Election or the 200,000 plus Iowans who have already requested an absentee ballot for this year's General Election? The Telegraph Herald seems to imply that those individuals also would be required to show identification before their ballots are counted.

As a former county auditor, I am not quite sure how this process would work. Would the voter copy their ID and send it with their ballot? If so, how would the auditor's office verify the ID provided belonged to the correct voter?

If the answer to those questions is that absentee voters are going to be exempted from having to show identification, we will have a voting process where there are different standards for how Iowans can participate. As someone who has administered elections for more than 25 years, I'm not comfortable with the idea that individuals voting at the polls, which accounts for two out of every three Iowa voters, will face greater obstacles than individuals participating by absentee.

These are all reasonable questions that should be part of this discussion. I'm disappointed that the Telegraph Herald failed to even raise these issues in its editorial. I'm equally disappointed that my office, the same office that oversees elections in Iowa, was not even contacted by the Telegraph Herald about this issue before the editorial appeared in print.

Mauro, a Democrat, was elected Iowa secretary of state in 2006

