



The Quill – 2015 Regional Argument Writing

In this excerpt, two authors argue for and against adopting voter ID cards. Write an argument essay which makes a specific claim stating your opinion about such an adoption. Use evidence from the article to support your opinion.

The Case For Voter ID Cards

The Commission on Federal Election Reform has proposed adoption of voter ID cards in a way that would both expand voter participation and increase confidence in the electoral process.

Twenty-four states already require some form of identification, and 12 more states are considering it. We were concerned that different requirements from state to state could be a source of discrimination. That's why we recommended that states use the new driver's licenses—mandated by the "Real ID Card" Act—as a uniform standard. That law, which takes effect in 2008, mandates that state driver's licenses meet federal standards, effectively creating a national ID card. For the approximately 12 percent of citizens who lack a driver's license, we propose that states assume responsibility for actively seeking out those citizens to register them to vote and to provide them with free IDs. It will be relatively easy to find those who are already registered, and every additional person found will mean an expansion of voter participation.

Some critics of voter IDs think the government cannot do this job, but Mexico and most poor democracies in the world have been able to register and give IDs to almost all their citizens. Surely the United States can do it too. Free photo IDs would also empower minorities, who are often charged exorbitant fees for cashing checks because they lack proper identification.

Regardless of how one views the importance of voter IDs, I hope that they do not deflect attention from the urgency of fixing our electoral system.

—**Jimmy Carter**

Former President and co-chair of the Commission on Federal Election Reform

The Case Against Voter ID Cards

A photo ID requirement at the polls would do much more harm than good. Up to 10 percent of voting-age Americans (19 million people) do not have a state-issued photo ID. Many of them are young, poor, disabled, elderly, or people of color. A recent study found that among men ages 18 to 24, 36 percent of whites and 78 percent of blacks lacked a valid driver's license.

Even if states provide free voter IDs for those without driver's licenses, there would still be the financial burden of providing the underlying documentation (like a birth certificate) to obtain that "free" ID. Furthermore, absentee voters who mail in their ballots prove their identity through their signatures; it's unfair to deny voters at the polls the same opportunity.

At the same time, a photo ID requirement would prevent very few fraudulent votes. An extensive investigation in Washington State uncovered less than one fraudulent vote for every 100,000 ballots cast in the 2004 governor's race.

The U.S. already deserves a grade of "D" in voter participation. We trail most democracies in voter turnout (139th out of 172 countries); about 61 percent of our eligible citizens voted in 2004. A photo ID requirement would further depress participation and ensure that our government does not reflect the will of all Americans.

The problem with American democracy is not voters, but unnecessary registration deadlines, long lines at the polls, and other hurdles like the proposed photo ID card—all of which diminish voter participation.

—**Spencer Overton**

Associate Professor of Law

George Washington University

Consider paying attention to the following Common Core State Standards for Writing:

- **W.6-8.1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.**
- **W.6-8.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.**



The Quill – 2015 Regional Informative/Explanatory Writing

Prompt:

In the following excerpt, Lucy Dalgish argues for why there should be a federal shield law for journalists. Write an essay providing information and explanation for the author's reasoning behind this claim.

Our nation's Founders believed a democracy could be successful only if basic freedoms were protected. Freedom of the press is the freedom that makes all the others work so well. In a functioning democracy, an independent press gives citizens truthful information so they can make good decisions about their government.

It's not always easy for journalists to learn the truth. Sometimes, reporters can get information only if they promise confidentiality to those who provide it. If their names become public, the sources might lose their jobs or be punished. Reporters believe it's important to protect sources so information continues to flow to the public.

But sometimes, when reporters are working on important stories that end up in court, they are asked to testify about what they know and who their sources are. This threatens a reporter's ability to be a neutral observer. If sources who've been promised confidentiality believe that a reporter might identify them in court, they will stop talking. And the public will never learn the truth.

Over the past few years, reporters have been ordered to testify in federal court cases with startling frequency. Some have been sent to jail because they refused to identify a source.

Most states have "shield laws" that protect journalists from having to identify confidential sources, but the federal government does not. A federal shield law would ensure that journalists can protect their sources, and that citizens get the information they need to participate in our democracy.

—**Lucy Dalglish**

The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press

"Should there be a federal shield law for journalists?" *Scholastic*. Scholastic, Inc., n.d. Web. 14 July 2014.

<http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=10851>

Consider paying attention to the following Common Core State Standards for Writing:

- **W.6-8.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.**
- **W.6-8.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience**



The Quill – 2015 Regional Narrative Writing

You have been given the opportunity to spend one day with any famous person from any time period. You may choose the activities and the location. Describe your meeting with this person in the form of a narrative. Choose an appropriate format for your creative product: a short story, a poem, a letter, or another format.

- **W.6-8.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.**
- **W.6-8.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience**



The Quill – 2015 Regional Problem / Solution

Childhood obesity has doubled in the past thirty years. Obesity leads to detrimental health effects like cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and numerous types of cancer.

Consider the implications of increased childhood obesity. Write your response in the form of a letter addressed to a government official in which you analyze the problem and offer your own potential solution(s). How do you propose to curb childhood obesity?

Consider paying attention to the following guidelines:

- Choose words that are well-suited to the purpose, audience, and context of your essay.
- Organize your essay so that your ideas progress logically.
- Include relevant details that clearly develop your essay.
- Edit your essay for standard grammar and language usage.