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## Organization opposing Hamilton legislation on voter identification

A statewide organization has come out against legislation sponsored by Rep. Dianne Hamilton, R-Silver City.

House Bill 235 would require voters to show photo identification, or provide the last four digits of their Social Security numbers, at the polls. This is the fourth time Hamilton has introduced the bill, which has yet to be passed out of committee.

"We want to make sure your vote is protected, so someone who is not a registered voter cannot (cast a ballot) and cancel out your vote," she said.

The option of providing a portion of one's Social Security number was added to the bill instead of having the state pay for photo-ID cards. The courts have ruled that requiring voters to purchase IDs amounts to a poll tax, in violation of civil-rights laws.

"I don't think there is anyone who doesn't have a Social Security number," Hamilton said.

However, New Mexico Voices for Children issued a news release this week criticizing the legislation.

The group wrote that the identification requirement could cost the state \$1.8 million per year for "implementation and administration of the law, and advertising campaigns to educate the public and avoid confusion on election day."

Gerry Bradley, research director for the organization, added: "Very little election fraud has been found by the New Mexico secretary of state's office, so this is the proverbial solution in search of a problem. Since voter fraud is so rare, we consider voter ID laws an attempt at voter suppression."

Those who would be "most adversely affected" by the law include the elderly, the disabled, veterans, rural residents, and racial and ethnic minorities, according to New Mexico Voices for Children.

Hamilton said she is "not surprised" that the organization opposes her bill, "because we don't agree on a lot of things."

"They tend to think we're looking to keep people from voting. It's not that, at all," she said, noting that the American Civil Liberties Union and the League of Women Voters also have come out against the measure.

Hamilton recently told the Daily Press that, if her bill becomes law this session, she will not seek another term in office. She has represented House District 38, which includes much of Grant and Sierra counties (as well as the Virden area in Hidalgo County), since 1999.

New Mexico Voices for Children describes itself as "a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization advocating for policies to improve the health and well-being of New Mexico's children, families and communities."

For more information about the group, visit [www.nmvoices.org](http://www.nmvoices.org).

—JIM OWEN