

Restrictive Photo Voter ID – 311 words

David Stulce (Photo ID can make elections honest – Sept 16) probably speaks for many people in confusing the issues around absentee primary voting with the November ballot measure about restrictive photo voter ID. The proposed constitutional Amendment 6 and its enabling legislation address only in-person voter impersonation – an entirely different issue. Equating the two is like suggesting a measles vaccination to protect against the Zika virus.

Voter impersonation at the polls is virtually non-existent. To commit it, one would have to know that the individual he is impersonating is a registered voter in that precinct, has not already cast a ballot and is not known by the local poll workers. He would then need to present credible identification as that other individual, risking criminal charges, fines, imprisonment and forfeiting his voting right for life if exposed. All in an effort to cast one fraudulent vote? Hardly an effective way to influence an election.

Missouri currently accepts a range of documents as proof of identity; this new measure would limit that to one – a non-expired Missouri driver's or non-driver's license. Contrary to popular belief, by no means everyone has a driver's license. In fact, comparing lists of currently registered voters against the DMV rolls reveals 220,000 Missourians who do not. Seniors, student, the disabled, the poor, immigrants – among others – would be disproportionately impacted.

Even if the state provides the required state photo ID at no charge, the process still requires transportation to a DMV office, time off from work, and supporting documentation that can be costly, difficult or even impossible to obtain

Each person's right to vote is a sacred tenet of our democracy. Disenfranchising tens of thousands of Missourians to solve a non-existent problem of in-person voter impersonation is simply wrong. To protect the right to vote for ourselves and all our neighbors we need to vote NO on Amendment 6.

Holiday Help for Poor Families – 323 words

It was simultaneously heartwarming and disheartening to read about the outpouring of help for the Furlow family after their financial and legal problems made front page news. (Help Comes in Waves – Nov 26) How lovely that generous individuals provided much-needed food, furniture and financial opportunities for this family. And how sad that their situation is just the tip of the iceberg of desperate need in our community. Those of us with greater resources can and should continue to reach out, but we can also use our influence to help change the systemic wrongs that create disparities in the first place.

In holiday interactions with family and friends we can counter the popular narrative that people are poor through some fault of their own - that they are just lazy and deserve their problems. Or that the poor could avoid financially devastating legal problems "if they just obeyed the law".

And after the holiday frenzy subsides, we can become powerful voices in support of initiatives to level the playing field for all.

We can stand with those demanding a livable minimum wage, so that any full-time job would lift a worker above the poverty line. Every fast-food restaurant posts owner contact information; take 90 seconds to make a phone call. Refuse to shop at big-box discounters staffed with workers so under-paid that they need food stamps to survive.

We can demand that the state fully funds the school funding formula and considers initiatives to give poor children the same kind of education that empowers our own kids to move on to college education and well-paid jobs.

We can insist that our representatives in Jefferson City put aside petty partisanship and activate the millions of Medicaid dollars that currently go unclaimed while hospitals close and our fellow citizens suffer without adequate care.

Helping a family in need is truly admirable. Advocating for systemic change is the path toward equal opportunity and dignity for all.

Protests Stop Traffic on I-270 – 227 words

It strikes me as the height of privilege to suggest – as many St Louisans have – that people protesting for racial equality lose white support when they take actions like traffic stoppages that cause us inconvenience.

Maybe it's time to consider the inconvenience of a black PhD educator who is pulled over by police every time she visits a professional colleague in West County. Or the inconvenience of a black mother and two teenage sons detained by security officers of an upscale clothing store they were exiting with large shopping bags of their purchases.

Or the inconvenience of a youngster catching a bus at 5:30 AM to attend a far-away school because her understaffed and underfunded neighborhood school is unaccredited. Or the greater inconvenience of that same child, later forced by a cheap trick of terminology to return to her now acceptable, "*NON*-accredited" local school.

Or the inconvenience of a young black man serving a lengthy prison sentence for the same drug usage that our kids' white schoolmates indulge with impunity. Or the ultimate inconvenience of black mothers worrying every day that their sons will be killed by someone mistakenly perceiving them as a threat.

Maybe it's time to stop complaining about our own inconvenience and dig into the hard work of correcting the indignities and injustices our fellow citizens face.

Cutting SNAP Benefits – 232 words

As a person of faith I was deeply saddened to read Thomas Grunzinger's comments about the supposed perversion of the Gospel message to feed the hungry and his support for the drastic cuts to the SNAP benefits program.

Perhaps he is not aware that a single mother of 2, fortunate enough to have full-time work in a minimum wage job, would earn \$15,600 in a year. Precisely what "non-essentials" would he suggest she give up in order to feed her family without assistance from the SNAP program? After-school childcare? Utilities? Winter clothing? Even seeming "extras" like a car, a cell phone and internet access are necessary to obtain and hold a job these days.

While training and hard work improve some people's financial circumstances, inadequate educational opportunities, family issues, medical conditions and the current state of the economy can all challenge a family trying to put food on the table. Rather than nitpicking about who the Gospel would consider "hungry enough" to merit feeding, we should consider the message common to many faiths: do unto others as we would have others do unto us.

Perhaps those who believe that food-insecure American families don't deserve help should try living just one month without the expenditures they so readily label "non-essentials" for others. I'd be interested to read how that experience influences their views on the subject.

Chick-fil-A President on LGBT Discrimination – 220 words

Chick-fil-A president Dan Cathy makes some lovely points about the biblical basis of his company's customer service philosophy in his interview with Kavita Kumar (Shop Talk 3/19/11) And he claims that the objections some local gay rights groups raised to his leadership workshop here are misguided. He is quoted as saying that his company employs gays and lesbians who are welcomed, embraced and considered part of the Chick-fil-A family.

Sadly, he goes on to say that the company does promote "strong marriage relationships" because he finds that among his teenage employees "when they come out of a home where they have a mom and dad to raise them, grow them, develop them, it makes our job as an employer so much better. People who are stronger in values and character do better jobs of taking care of customers."

Does Mr. Cathy not realize that many fine young people with equally strong values and character are being raised, grown and developed in families with with two moms or two dads? I can't find anything in Jesus' teachings that would support demeaning or discriminating against those young people or their families. And I suspect that those two-mom and two-dad families would like nothing more than to be permitted the "strong marriage relationships" that Mr. Cathy so enthusiastically supports.