

## The Oregonian

### Lawmakers must cease fake voter registration

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Immediately before issuing his not guilty verdicts in the trial of Fabio and Sergio Robleto, Washington County Circuit Judge Michael J. McElligott, known for being somewhat quirky, said it best: "Clearly, crimes were being committed."

McElligott remarked -- in open court -- on the regular attendance of a large number of observers at a trial accusing the brothers of driver's license fraud. Noting that it was neither a murder trial nor a rape trial, he asked why we were there. We replied how horrified we were to learn that Oregon was the destination for obtaining false credentials and that the lax policies of our state could well be putting national security at risk.

Frustration and outrage best describe our sentiments after observing nearly every minute of the recent driver's license fraud trials. Incredibly, the three defendants -- Sergio, Miguel and Fabio Robleto -- were acquitted.

In this post 9/11 era, the gravity of the criminal schemes described in detail at the trial cannot be overstated.

We heard how illegal individuals from all over the globe were brought to Oregon for the sole purpose of acquiring Oregon driver's licenses and other undeserved identity credentials. Tens of thousands of such documents are at large and may be exchanged in other states, no questions asked.

With these credentials, terrorists may smoothly circumvent security precautions at airports and other sensitive locations.

Based on testimony by an undercover detective at the Miguel Robleto trial, "visiting clients" were instructed to first buy a fraudulently addressed envelope with an Oregon address, then register to vote. These nonresident "clients" could then expect to receive a voter identity card, delivered perhaps to a motel address.

The "matricula consular" card, distributed by the Mexican Consulate at frequently held "carousels of information," was a third identity credential approved by the state Department of Motor Vehicles to qualify for a driver's license.

Other disturbing testimony came from DMV employees. They revealed how they were reprimanded by their superiors when they reported the highly suspicious envelopes submitted by Robleto's "clients" seeking a driver's license. Their managers told them "law enforcement was not their job."

Oregon has become the chosen destination for these brazen frauds, in large part due to inane "honor system" policies employed by the Department of Motor Vehicles as well as Oregon's Elections Division.

Secretary of State Bill Bradbury's voter registration process does not require any proof of legal U.S. status or length of Oregon residency. Exploitation should be expected, not to mention the corruption of Oregon's electoral rolls.

Oregon lawmakers, the governor and the secretary of state owe Oregonians a remedy. They must immediately implement the Federal Real I.D. Act, no later than early in the 2007 legislative session.

The Real I.D. Act requires proof of legal status in the United States to qualify for a driver's license, which is a key credential used by applicants for voter registration.

In addition to implementing the Real I.D. Act, both DMV and electoral records should be thoroughly purged to revoke all illegal documents and voter registrations.

These improvements are the very least that Oregon's leadership must do for constituents, given what has occurred on their watch.

Mike Balanesi of Hillsboro and Ruth Bendl of Cedar Hills were joint authors of House Bill 2583, which requires proof of citizenship from people when first registering to vote. The bill was approved by the Oregon House but died when it was not addressed by the Senate.

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