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**Capitol View**

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**Voter ID Bill Highlights Rift in the Party in Power**

The voter ID measure, a solution in search of a problem, has been thankfully watered down in legislative action that clearly indicates the wheels on the Republican juggernaut are wobbly, if not ready to come off.

Turns out the chief opponent to the bill and an amendment that came from the Government Committee was Republican Sen. Julie Slama who was the poster child for a ballot initiative that got the topic before lawmakers. The initiative was largely funded by recent Governor Pete Ricketts’ mother. Slama was a Ricketts’ appointee to the officially nonpartisan Legislature.

When the committee didn’t see things her way and removed some items they deemed obstructive, she mounted an 8-hour filibuster against the measure. But, after a vote to move ahead, the committee version advanced 43-1.

Yes, this is the same Senator who turned to a negative advertising campaign smearing her Republican opponent to ensure her election. Slama is a recent law school graduate who has been known, in my opinion, to dramatize her so-called plight. This time around she cast dispersions on Secretary of State Bob Evnen, a Republican.

Even Attorney General Mike Hilgers, also a Republican, got in on the action by questioning a couple things that required yet another amendment. Slama complained that she wasn’t invited to discuss the amendment.

State Sen. Tom Brewer, a Republican from Gordon who chairs the Legislature’s Government and Military Affairs Committee, said his staff was working to get things right. Slama complained it wasn’t as conservative as it should be. I ask, by whose test?

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Slama wanted fewer exceptions for people who can’t present an ID to vote. She also did not like a provision in the bill that allows early voters to write down their own ID number, with election officials checking those numbers against a state database of state-approved photo IDs.

Her approach would have required a witness or a notary public to sign an early voter’s ballot envelope and vouch that they had seen a person’s photo ID.

As someone who has been voting early by mail since the Covid outbreak, I was particularly concerned about having to find a notary to verify our ballots. In case you hadn’t noticed, there aren’t notaries hanging out on street corners in Lincoln. I can only imagine what it must be like in Greater Nebraska.

Additionally, Slama wanted added layers of citizenship checks on voters beyond the state’s current checks when someone registers to vote. Voting rights advocates argued that the exceptions in the committee amendment for people without IDs follow federal election law and federal election case law.

Slama told the Legislature’s conservatives to question the bill because; oh no, some Democrats backed it. She said, “This process and procedure has failed Nebraskans.” Again, by whose standards senator?

Here’s a clue senator. There has been no evidence of voter fraud in Nebraska. Hence, while this bill helps you and a handful of your conservative cronies look good in the eyes of legislators in other red states, I still contend it’s a solution without a problem.

Democrat state Sen. Danielle Conrad of Lincoln, who serves on the Government Committee, told her colleagues: “What you have here, my friends, is not a conspiracy but a consensus.”

Brewer and members of his committee noted letters of support for the committee amendment from 92 of the state’s 93 county election commissioners. (The exception was Sarpy County, where Slama’s sister, Emily Ethington, serves as election commissioner.)

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Republicans not getting along with other Republicans. Imagine that. Sounds like a national thing, eh? Certainly not Unicameral nonpartisan. Definitely not Nebraska nice.

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