

Civil Rights Leader Andrew Young Calls on President Barack Obama to Order Photo Option for Social Security Cards

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Andrew Young speaks during a dedication ceremony at the Martin Luther King Memorial on the National Mall, Oct. 16, 2011, in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Brendan Smialowski/Getty Images)

Civil rights leader Andrew Young is calling on President Barack Obama to issue an executive order allowing a photo option on Social Security cards, ensuring free accessible photo IDs to prevent voter suppression in states adopting voter ID laws.

Adding photos to Social Security cards allows groups less likely to have photo IDs -- senior citizens, minorities, and poor and less educated people -- to still be able to vote, said Young, a former mayor of Atlanta and ambassador to the United Nations.

Young made his remarks Wednesday at the Civil Rights Summit in Austin, Texas, where Obama is set to speak Thursday.

He also wants an update to the Voting Rights Act, citing the blow the Supreme Court dealt it in last year's landmark decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*.

In that case, the court struck down the formula for determining which states and local governments must get federal approval to change their voting laws and practices, finding the requirement outdated. The decision means no jurisdiction will be subjected to such federal preclearance until Congress enacts a formula based on current data and needs.

Shelby County, Ala., had argued that the blatant racial intimidation and discrimination in voting procedures that existed when the law was written in 1965 and renewed in 1970, 1975 and 1982 no longer exist.

"Last year, the Supreme Court gutted the [Voting Rights Act](#) of 1965, and one major repercussion is the increased likelihood of photo identification laws in states across the country," Young said. "I've said in the past that I'm not against photo identification, but only as long as the cards are free and easily accessible. Providing the ability to obtain a photo on a Social Security card will help to prevent voter suppression in states which have or are trying to adopt voter ID laws."

With 1,300 offices located across the country and already tasked with issuing free cards, the Social Security Administration is ideal for providing photo IDs for all, Young said.

"The rights of voters are currently under attack during a time when our nation is already suffering from staggeringly low turnout," he said. "President Johnson, who we honor here today, said he wanted 'to be the president who helped the poor to find their own way and who protected the right of every citizen to vote in every election.' We must honor that legacy today and demand voting be made more accessible."