

Voter ID Laws: Hurting Students Ability to Vote

The Problem

The Help America Vote Act brought Voter ID laws into the political eye starting in 2000.

(Bright, 2017) Since then many states responded by passing laws requiring photo identification at the polls. The map below shows the states which have adopted various forms of Voter ID laws - **25** of which required a **photo ID**. These were passed in an effort to curb voter fraud.

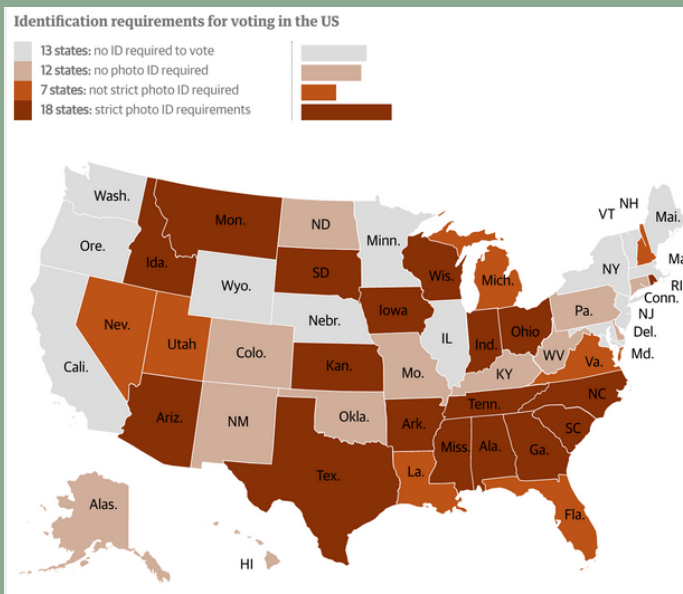


Figure 1. "Which States Make it the Hardest to Vote?" from The Guardian by A.Rao, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2019/nov/07/which-us-states-hardest-vote-suppression-election>

The reason Voter Identification laws are an issue is because they are yet another **stressor** to **a student's ability to vote**. This is due to a common difference in where they go to school and where they received a valid photo ID from. Additionally, some students, "may not own or drive a car" (Carter, 2019) and therefore would not possess a driver's license to use as an ID.

Terms to Know:

Photo ID

"an identification document that has a photo on it, such as a driver's license, state-issued identification card, military ID, tribal ID, and many other forms of ID" (Underhill, 2020)

Voter Fraud

"the idea that non-citizens are participating in elections in order to change the outcomes" (Musgrove, 2018)

Student ID

"a card verifying someone's identity as a university student and entitling them to services, discounts, etc." (Collins English Dictionary, n.d.)

Partisan Views:

What does each side think about Voter ID laws?



Democrats believe "any efforts to curb voter fraud are not worth the risks of reduced voter turnout and disenfranchisement that new laws pose" (Bright, 2017)

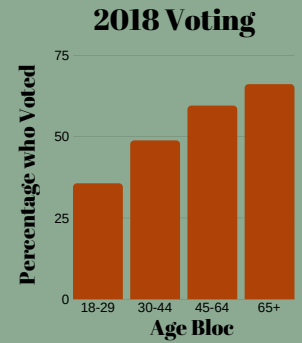


Republicans believe "these laws will prevent ineligible voters, such as felons, noncitizens, and individuals who have already voted from voting illegally" (Bright, 2017)

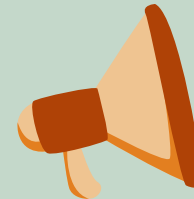
Why does it matter?

- ✔ Deterrents to college aged voters already exist such as lack of transportation to the polls, lack of knowledge, and residency requirements. Voter ID laws present yet another deterrent. (Gonzalez, 2019)
- ✔ The Republican claim that Voter ID laws are needed to protect against voter fraud are unfounded. (Cottrell et al., 2018) The fear which this claim has brought about, specifically by the current President, has led to the passage of stricter voter laws.

- ✔ College students are part of the voting bloc, 18 to 29 year olds, with the least amount of participation. (Misra, 2019)
- ✔ “Voting is a habit—if students stop voting due to the complexity of the process, it is unlikely that they will continue voting” (Carter, 2019) We must encourage out students to participate as citizens for life, not deter them while the habit is forming.



Solutions



Legalize the Use of College ID's

The partisanship which surrounds this issue makes the abolition of these laws unlikely.

Therefore, a compromise is needed to enable college students to vote and lower the burden. Allowing students to utilize their college student ID at the polls is an easy way to break down the barrier Voter ID laws cause. This solution is already enacted in states such as Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, and Virginia. Proponents claim it, “allows college students access to voting on Election Day, improves convenience for college students to vote since a lot of students do not have driver’s licenses and often do not carry other forms of identification, and alleviates a “double standard” when other IDs, such as driver’s licenses, are not scrutinized to the extent college student IDs are” (Carter, 2019).

Advertise to Educate

Education is effective when it takes the form of advertisement. This was shown in regards to Voter ID laws through a study done in Kansas on Douglas county. County clerks advertised to their constituents about the new Voter ID laws. After the election, “Douglas County’s efforts saw a 2.3 percent average higher turnout in its precincts compared with similar precincts in the rest of the state.” (Bright, 2017). Although this is a solution to overcoming barriers for the general public rather than the specific concerns of students, it shows there can be improvement in the effects of Voter ID laws by educating voters on how to deal with them. An ad campaign could be most effectively enacted on a local government level or through universities.

Allowing students to use their student ID and implementing an advertisement campaign to educate them will alleviate the burden they face through Voter ID laws.

Resources

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