

# Addendum: Voter ID Laws

## Executive Summary

The elections system in the U.S. is highly decentralized, with individual states responsible for administering state and federal elections. As a result, states vary in their voting regulations, and in particular, whether or not an ID is requested or required to be presented at the voting booth. Election security has been cited as a reason for implementing voter ID laws. However, they also introduce additional barriers to voting, which may lower voter turnout.

## Highlights

- Voter ID laws have not been observed to decrease instances of voter fraud or perceptions of voter fraud.
- Research has shown that minority voters are disproportionately asked to show voter ID due to uneven implementation of voter ID laws by poll workers.

## Limitations

- Research on the impacts of voter ID laws on voter turnout provides mixed results. Therefore, more research is warranted to clearly understand the effect.

---

## Research Background

### Voter ID Laws in the US

Thirty-five states request or require some form of voter ID at the polls.<sup>1</sup> The other 15 states have other varying methods for verifying voters. These include signature verification (see previous [Science Note](#)), the signing of an affidavit asserting the voter's eligibility, or the voter may be required to provide biographical information.<sup>2</sup> These are not mutually exclusive and some states may require more than one of these methods.

Of the 35 states that either request or require a voter ID, 18 states require a photo ID, and 17 states do not require a photo. These 35 states also differ in how they handle voters who are unable to provide proper identification. In some states, such as [Iowa](#) and [Kentucky](#), some voters without proper identification may still have an option to cast a ballot. In Kentucky, if a voter fails to bring proper photo identification, the voter may still vote if they sign a "Reasonable Impediment Declaration" and present a non-photo ID. In other states, such as [Arkansas](#) and [Indiana](#), rules are more strict and voters without proper identification are required to fill out a provisional ballot and take additional steps after election day for it to be counted. Several states including Indiana, Kansas, Iowa, and Missouri provide free voter IDs. In some instances free IDs for voting purposes are restricted to citizens who do not currently possess a valid ID.

Missouri voters must present a voter ID issued by Missouri, the U.S. government, or an institute of higher education ([RSMo 115.427](#)). A copy of a utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, or other government document that contains the name and address of the voter may also be used. If a voter does not have an acceptable form of identification, they may fill out a provisional ballot that will be counted if they return to the polling place on election day with a photo ID, or the signature on the provisional ballot envelope is verified to match the signature on the voter's voter registration record.<sup>3</sup>

## The Impacts of Voter ID Laws

Research investigating voter ID laws has not observed a reduction in voter fraud instances after these laws are passed.<sup>4</sup> Analysis of survey results have also shown that voter ID laws do not decrease voter beliefs about the presence of voter fraud in an election.<sup>4,6</sup> For more information on voter fraud, see our previously published [Science Note](#).

Research on the impact of voter ID laws on voter turnout provides mixed results. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) came to this conclusion in their 2014 report on issues related to voter ID laws. Their own analysis however, suggests that voter ID laws accounted for a decrease in voter turnout in Kansas and Tennessee from 2008 to 2012.<sup>7</sup> More recent research since the 2014 GAO report is similarly mixed.<sup>4,8-13</sup> Research that does find an effect of voter ID laws on voter turnout, finds that minorities, and in particular Latino and Hispanic voters, are disproportionately affected.<sup>10,12,13</sup> Some researchers have proposed explanations for forces that may mitigate the effects of the additional barriers from voter ID requirements. For instance, some states conduct informational campaigns to inform voters of new voter ID laws, and groups opposed to voter ID laws may respond to the implementation of a new voter ID law by conducting outreach campaigns.

Studies have also investigated whether voter ID laws are implemented consistently across varying demographics. In some states where voters are not required to present an ID, poll workers may still ask voters to present one. It has been shown that Black and Hispanic voters are disproportionately asked to show IDs relative to other populations, even after adjusting for other factors such as income, education, party identification, and age.<sup>14-16</sup>

## References

1. National Conference of State Legislatures. (2022, January 7). Voter ID Laws. NCSL. Retrieved January 12, 2022, from <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-id.aspx#Ftn%202>
2. National Conference of State Legislatures. (2022, January 10). Voter Verification Without ID Documents. NCSL. Retrieved January 12, 2022, from <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-verification-without-id-documents.aspx>
3. Missouri Secretary of State - IT. (n.d.). If you are registered to vote, you can vote! Missouri Secretary of State. Retrieved January 12, 2022, from <https://www.sos.mo.gov/showit2vote>

4. Cantoni, E., Pons, V. (2021). Strict ID laws don't stop voters: Evidence from a U.S. nationwide panel, 2008–2018. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 136(4), 2615–2660.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjab019>
5. Ansolabehere, S., Persily, N. (2008). Vote fraud in the eye of the beholder: The role of public opinion in the challenge to voter identification requirements. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.  
<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1099056>
6. Stewart, C., Ansolabehere, S., Persily, N. (2016). Revisiting Public Opinion on Voter Identification and Voter Fraud in an Era of Increasing Partisan Polarization. *Stanford Law Review*, 68(6).
7. U.S. Govt. Accountability Office, Elections: Issues related to state voter identification laws (2014). Washington, D.C.
8. Hajnal, Z., Lajevardi, N., Nielson, L. (2017). Voter identification laws and the suppression of minority votes. *The Journal of Politics*, 79(2), 363–379. <https://doi.org/10.1086/688343>
9. Grimmer, J., Hersh, E., Meredith, M., Mummolo, J., Nall, C. (2018). Obstacles to estimating voter ID laws' effect on turnout. *The Journal of Politics*, 80(3), 1045–1051.  
<https://doi.org/10.1086/696618>
10. Hajnal, Z., Kuk, J., Lajevardi, N. (2018). We all agree: Strict voter ID laws disproportionately burden minorities. *The Journal of Politics*, 80(3), 1052–1059. <https://doi.org/10.1086/696617>
11. Heller, L. R., Miller, J., Stephenson, E. F. (2019). Voter ID laws and voter turnout. *Atlantic Economic Journal*, 47(2), 147–157. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11293-019-09623-8>
12. Kuk, J., Hajnal, Z., Lajevardi, N. (2020). A disproportionate burden: Strict voter identification laws and minority turnout. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 10(1), 126–134.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2020.1773280>
13. Darrah-Okike, J., Rita, N., Logan, J. R. (2020). The suppressive impacts of voter identification requirements. *Sociological Perspectives*, 64(4), 536–562.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0731121420966620>
14. Cobb, R. V. (2012). Can voter ID laws be administered in a race-neutral manner? evidence from the City of Boston in 2008. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 7(1), 1–33.  
<https://doi.org/10.1561/100.00010098>
15. Atkeson, L. R., Bryant, L. A., Hall, T. E., Saunders, K., Alvarez, M. (2010). A new barrier to participation: Heterogeneous application of voter identification policies. *Electoral Studies*, 29(1), 66–73. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2009.08.001>
16. Ansolabehere, S. (2009). Effects of identification requirements on voting: Evidence from the experiences of voters on Election Day. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 42(01), 127–130.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/s1049096509090313>