



Spread The Vote

Greetings!

What is Spread The Vote?

Spread The Vote (STV) helps eligible voters obtain government issued photo ID for work, housing, voting, and more. We help with documentation, fees, transportation, and everything else that it takes to obtain an ID. To find out more about us, visit our website: <https://www.spreadthevote.org/>

Why Voter IDs?

Simply put, a voter ID law is any regulation requiring that a voter furnish proof of identity in order to cast a ballot in an election. As of 2016, **over 30 states require some form of identification at the polls**. On the surface, these laws seem like common sense, but a closer look reveals that **they do more harm than good**.

Legislators in favor of these laws claim that they are intended to prevent in-person voter fraud. However, this type of fraud is so rare as to be statistically insignificant – between 2000 and 2014 there were only 31 documented cases. Fraud via absentee ballot is actually much more common, but ID laws do nothing to address this.

So why do legislators continue to offer ‘solutions’ to a nonexistent problem? GOP lawmakers frequently refer to a 2013 study, which claims that as many as 14% of noncitizens had cast votes in recent US elections. Donald Trump himself, as well as many of his staff, cite it to back up the administration’s claim that he only lost the popular vote because “millions of illegals” voted. This study has now been universally debunked, including by the team that collected the data in the first place, and the entire social science community agrees that it should never have been published, but proponents of ID laws continue to cite it as gospel. But when we examine exactly who these voter ID laws affect, it’s not hard to see why.

Currently, about 11% of voting age Americans (that’s over 21 million people) lack a

government-issued ID – 13% of African-Americans, 10% of Hispanics, and 5% of whites. Under federal election law, any state requiring a state-issued document in order to vote must provide that document for free (if it doesn't, the law constitutes a poll tax, which was outlawed by the 24th Amendment). Many states with ID laws in place do offer free IDs in theory – but **study after study has shown that these “free” ID’s are often costly and difficult to obtain in practice.**

The obstacles to obtaining voter ID are numerous. First, the voter must gather documentation – things like birth certificates, naturalization papers, social security cards, marriage certificates for women who have changed their names, and proof of residence. Original copies are usually required, which can cost money to obtain. **The poor face the challenge of paying** for all this paperwork. **The homeless lack the residential address required to register.** Elderly voters who were born in rural areas may have never been issued birth certificates, and must make their way through an endless bureaucratic maze in order to prove their identities. Students and young voters may find their dormitory addresses are not accepted. Native Americans who live on reservations may find that PO Boxes are not accepted either.

If a voter manages to gather all their paperwork, another challenge looms: actually getting to their nearest ID-issuing office. **Over 10 million eligible voters live over 10 miles from their nearest ID-issuing office.** Many offices are only open part-time – these are often concentrated in poor, rural, and majority-minority areas. Offices in cities often face long wait times due to high demand. The working poor often cannot afford to take time off in order to go obtain ID, or risk losing their job if they do so. For many, the cost of transportation alone is an insurmountable obstacle.

We've already established that these laws don't prevent fraud, since in-person fraud barely exists in the first place. They also have not been shown to increase confidence in elections. So what is the true effect of voter ID laws? Studies consistently show us: **These laws disproportionately suppress voter turnout for the young, new voters, the elderly, and minorities** – the very groups that are in dire need of more representation in our government.

This is where **Spread The Vote** comes in. **Our goal is to help every single American, no matter their background or party affiliation, obtain the identification they need to participate in our democracy.** We work directly in states with ID laws to help voters through every phase of the process. If you can't afford the paperwork, we'll pay for it. If you don't have a car or can't afford gas right now, we'll drive you to the DMV. If your state's law is confusing, our experts will walk you through every phase of the process.

Our focus at STV is not on advocating for change in the laws. Nor are we helping voters circumvent them. We simply want to make it as easy as possible for Americans to follow the laws.

We believe voting is the sacred right of every American, and every American should be able to exercise it.

Need an ID?

We can help you get the ID you need to vote. Contact us online at www.spreadthevote.org/vote, by text at (323) 694-0738, or by e-mail at takeaction@spreadthevote.org.