

Disenfranchised: Report Looks at How Voter ID Laws Set Up Roadblocks to Voting



Restrictive voter ID laws now in effect in ten states are putting the right to vote of at least half a million eligible voters at risk, a new report from the Brennan Center shows.

“The Declaration of Independence says that all men are created equal, but new voter ID laws are preventing eligible Americans from participating in our democracy,” said Keesha Gaskins, Senior Counsel at the Brennan Center and co-author of the new report, *The Challenge of Obtaining Voter Identification*, which looks at Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin's voter ID law impacts. “Voters find closed offices, long trips without cars and spotty public transit, and prohibitive costs for documents needed to get ID. Unless states with voter identification laws address these barriers now, many eligible citizens could lose their opportunity to vote this November.”

Barriers to obtaining the necessary ID hits people of color and the elderly especially hard. 25 percent of African-Americans and 18 percent of Americans over 65 lack the documentation required. And the people who most lack the documentation most are

more likely live in areas that lack the proper ID-issuing offices.

The roadblocks for these eligible voters to obtain the necessary ID are considerable. The government office may be far away, or just inaccessible. The reports states that "more than 10 million eligible voters live more than 10 miles from their nearest state ID-issuing office" while 450,000 eligible voters in these ten states do not have vehicle access and live more than 10 miles from the nearest office that can issue the proper ID. These same eligible voters may live in an area without public transportation.

The offices themselves have roadblocks with their hours. Some have no weekend hours, some are not even open five days a week, while in the bizarre case in Sauk, Wis. the office is only open the fifth Wednesday of any month.

The report also disproves the claim that these needed IDs would be provided free. While the state-issued ID itself might be free, the required documentation to get that ID, such as a birth certificate, marriage license or certificate of citizenship is not. Not included in the report's look at costs is the potential loss of wages an eligible voter might face by needing to take off work to meet the government office's spotty hours and possible transportation time.

“Every American citizen should have the opportunity to vote, but these restrictive laws could make it harder for hundreds of thousands to exercise that right,” said Sundeep Iyer, Principal Quantitative Analyst at the Center and co-author of the report. “Instead of making it more difficult for citizens to go to the polls, we need new laws to modernize our voting system so all eligible Americans can vote on Election Day while reducing the potential for fraud or abuse.”

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Read the full report below:

[The Challenge of Obtaining Voter Identification](#)