

America Votes Act of 2013

Introduced by Rep. Rick Larsen (WA-02)

Endorsed by: Demos, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, AAUW of Everett, the Economic Opportunity Institute

The Bill:

The America Votes Act of 2013 allows eligible voters who do not have identification documents required by their state to sign a sworn statement attesting to their identity in order to cast a standard ballot at the polls. This legislation does not preempt any other federal law on voting.

The Facts:

- As of April 10, 2013, legislation is being reviewed in 30 states on voter ID requirements, including new voter ID legislation in 12 states, and efforts in seven states to strengthen existing requirements. (National Conference of State Legislatures)
- As many as one in four African-American voters, more than one in six Hispanic voters, and about one in 10 eligible voters overall do not possess a current and valid government-issued photo ID. (Brennan Center for Justice)
- According a report led by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, during the 2012 elections "New voter identification laws caused a great deal of voter confusion and were widely misapplied by poll workers who were confused about what was acceptable identification, which added to wait times and forced too many eligible voters to vote provisionally." (Our Broken Voting System and How to Repair It, the 2012 Election Protection Report)
- A recent study on the impact of voter ID laws determined that minority youth were asked for ID at the polls at higher rates than white youth, even in states that don't require voter ID, and 17.3 percent of black youth said ID requirements prevented them from voting. (Politico)
- In some states, voters who do not meet voter ID requirements will be issued a provisional ballot, which may require a return trip to the polls to demonstrate proof of identity.
- This bill gives options to poor, elderly, young and minority voters who are under threat of disenfranchisement. American Enterprise Institute scholar Norman Ornstein suggests this method as a way to protect eligible voters who do not possess formal ID documents that meet the requirements in their state from being excluded from elections. (Roll Call)
- With this bill, voters who have made the effort to vote, taking time off work, getting a ride to the polls, or otherwise making a special effort to fulfill their civic duty will not be turned away at the polls.
- This bill helps preserve voting rights in America.

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