

America Votes Act of 2015

Introduced by Rep. Rick Larsen (WA-02)

The Bill:

The America Votes Act of 2015 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 March 2015, [two-thirds of states had passed laws](#) requiring some kind of identification from people at the polls. (National Conference of State Legislatures)
- A [Government Accountability Office study last fall](#) found that voter ID laws have a disproportionately negative impact on African Americans because in many places, fewer African Americans have the kind of ID they need to vote.
- A [study by UCLA's Williams Institute](#) found that in the states with the most stringent voter ID laws, transgender people who have transitioned might not have identification that correctly recognizes their gender. All the more troubling is that transgender people who are students, minorities, low-income and who have disabilities are even more likely to be without an ID that will allow them to make their voice heard at the ballot box.
- 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](#))
- 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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