
FACT SHEET: Challenges to Obtaining a Voter ID

Since the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, a number of states and jurisdictions formerly covered by Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act have considered – and some have enacted – new discriminatory voting laws, such as the introduction of voter ID requirements. Further, in 2014, there have been a series of court decisions concerning these issues, particularly in states including North Carolina, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Texas.

While polling suggests that voter ID requirements are generally supported, the impact of these laws is not widely discussed among the public. In fact, these laws disproportionately impact and disenfranchise minorities, low-income individuals, seniors, people with disabilities, rural residents and young adults. Photo ID requirements make voting more inaccessible for certain groups of voters who often already face challenges getting to the polls. For example, the U.S. Supreme Court sided with Texas, allowing the state to implement a voter ID law, despite a lower court ruling that the law is intentionally discriminatory, unconstitutional, and could prevent more than [600,000 Texas citizens](#) from voting in the November election and beyond.

- According to the Brennan Center for Justice, one in 10 eligible voters lack the photo ID required by new restrictive voter ID laws, including 25 percent of African Americans, 18 percent of seniors, 18 percent of citizens aged 18-24, 15 percent of voters earning less than \$35,000 a year, 10 percent of voters with disabilities, and about [27 percent of transgender people \(who lack valid photo ID that accurately reflects their gender identity\)](#).
- The Brennan Center notes that more than 10 million eligible voters in states that require photo ID at the polls live at least 10 miles away from ID-issuing offices.
 - About [500,000](#) of these eligible voters do not have access to a vehicle (e.g. those with disabilities, seniors, low-income Americans, students, etc.), limiting their ability to get to an ID-issuing office.
 - Many people with physical disabilities don't drive and must rely on family members, caretakers, or public transit for transportation.
 - Because of costs associated with car payments, insurance, gas, etc., many low income Americans do not have a car.
 - Many young adults, especially those in college, do not yet have licenses.
- ID-issuing offices have limited and often irregular hours (e.g. none are open on weekends), and therefore, constantly have long lines – particularly challenging [minorities who disproportionately work in non-salaried jobs](#) where they're less likely to receive paid time off to travel to an ID-issuing office, let alone vote, during business hours.
 - [ID-issuing offices](#) are scarce in areas that are heavily populated by people of color, those in poverty and rural residents, which are the populations that most often lack government-issued photo ID.

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- Voter ID is essentially an unconstitutional poll tax that discriminates against people of color. While states requiring photo IDs may offer specific IDs that they claim are “free,” the cost, in terms of time, effort, and dollars is often significant.
 - [The supporting documentation](#), such as a birth certificate or marriage license, required to obtain a state-issued photo ID in order to vote is one expense.
 - In addition, there are significant costs required to arrange obtaining a voter ID, including transportation, childcare and lost pay at work, which often affect minorities and those living in poverty more severely.
 - According to Judith Browne-Dianis, co-director of the Advancement Project, many elderly Black residents – who were born at home in the segregated South and never had a birth certificate – must now go to court to prove their identity.
 - In many states, student ID cards are not accepted as a legitimate form of voter ID. And because many students attend school outside of their home state, they may not have ready access to the supporting documents needed to obtain a valid voter ID, making the voting process that much more inaccessible.
 - Married women who have changed their surname have to present a marriage license with their current name to obtain a photo ID. The fee required to obtain the documents required for a married woman to receive a photo ID are often burdensome.