

The SAVE Act: What it is, why it's so bad, and what we can do to stop it

What is the SAVE Act?

The SAVE (Safeguard American Voter Eligibility) Act is a bill in Congress that would require every American to provide documentary proof of citizenship – in person – to register to vote in federal elections or change or update their voter registration. This bill passed in the US House in April is now in Committee in the US Senate ([S 128](#)).

Why is the SAVE Act bad?

To start, these requirements are wholly unnecessary, as citizenship is already verified by election officials before voter granting eligibility, and [voter fraud is exceedingly rare](#). But the real issue is that very few kinds of documentation meet the “documentary proof of citizenship” definition; the document needs to show citizenship on its face. In all but 5 states ([Michigan](#), [Minnesota](#), [New York](#), [Vermont](#), and [Washington](#)), REAL ID cards don't do this, nor do most other forms of ID. For the majority of Americans, documentation would be limited to birth certificates, passports, and naturalization papers.

If an eligible voter doesn't have a passport and their name doesn't match their birth certificate or naturalization papers, the law tells the states to figure out their own system for verifying citizenship. What that would actually look like is unknown, which is scary. A state could decide a marriage certificate showing the eligible voter's name change in concert with their birth certificate wasn't enough to prove citizenship– that kind of ambiguity makes room for policies that could make proving citizenship almost impossible for many. And it can take a long time to put new election laws into place at the state level, so if there's an election before Ohio passes a new law to address this, countless Ohioans could be denied their constitutional right to vote.

If the SAVE Act becomes law, eligible voters can only register or re-register in person, and only election officials would be able to register or re-register them. This would ban

eligible voters from registering or updating their voter registration by mail, through community registration drives, at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV), or anywhere else election officials were not. In addition to severely limiting Ohioans' opportunities to vote, this would also place an extraordinary burden on our election system, which does not have the capacity to verify citizenship eligibility in person for thousands and thousands of Ohioans. If SAVE was passed into law today, the only place in Ohio where people could register or re-register would be county boards of elections, and Ohio has only one per county.

Who would the SAVE Act impact?

Women

- There are more than [3.5 million women in Ohio who are or have been married](#).
- More than [3/4 of women in the US change their name when they get married](#). Many will be unable to get the documents needed to prove citizenship.

Rural Ohioans

- [Rural Americans are almost twice as likely as urban Americans to lack access to a birth certificate or passport](#).
- [About 1/4 of Ohio's population is in rural parts of the state](#): that's nearly 3 million people.
- Each Ohio county has only one board of elections, meaning long travel times for many residents.
- Lack of public transportation is a significant barrier in rural areas.

Older Ohioans

- The older a birth certificate or marriage license, the harder it may be to retrieve.
- Official documents like these may simply be gone, no longer kept on public record.
- Those in assisted living facilities may not be able to get to their county board of elections.
- [Ohio has more than 2 million people aged 65 years and older](#).

Black Ohioans

- [Black Americans are almost twice as likely as white Americans to lack access to a birth certificate or passport](#).

- Many older Black Americans, born during the pre-civil rights era, were never even issued a birth certificate.
- There are more than [1 million Black Ohioans 25 years and older](#).

Active-duty military, National Guard members and their families

- Service members may not be able to return home to register or update their registration in person ahead of an election.
- Ohio has more than [11k active-duty service members, and 4.6k Ohioans are married to active-duty service members](#); military spouses may also be unable to get back to Ohio in time to register or re-register to vote.
- Ohio also has more than [35k National Guard and reserve members](#), who could be on deployment during the registration window.

Ohioans with disabilities

- SAVE says states should make “reasonable accommodations” for voters with disabilities but does not say what those accommodations should be.
- SAVE also does not say what kinds of disabilities would be included in these accommodations, or how the voter would prove their disability was eligible.
- There are [1.5 million Ohioans over the age of 18 who experience a disability](#).
- [Voters with disabilities are already twice as likely as voters without disabilities to have difficulties voting](#).

Young Ohioans and students

- People [18-29 move more often than any other age group](#), necessitating frequent updates to their voter registration. This is especially true for students.
- Many will not be able to reach a county board of elections during designated hours due to the distance, conflicting schedules, or lack of public transportation.
- Ohio has more than [1.5 million residents between the ages of 20-29](#), and more than [500k students are enrolled in Ohio colleges and universities](#)

Election workers

- [Election workers are already overworked and underpaid](#).
- Election workers would also be subject to criminal penalties, including prison, if they help to register or reregister a prospective voter who had incorrect proof of citizenship, even if the registered voter is a citizen.
- Increasing burdens on election workers could create a chilling effect in recruiting and hiring new election workers, as many will not want to put themselves at risk.

What's likely to happen next with the SAVE Act?

- This legislation passed the US House on April 10, 2025. It's now headed to the Senate.
- We have a much better chance to stop SAVE in the Senate because the bill needs 60 votes to pass.
- We are hopeful that we can defeat this extreme anti-voter legislation but this is likely to be a close vote, so we need everyone to help stop it.

What can we do to stop the SAVE Act?

Two things:

1. Tell everybody– talk about it, share in your social media, put info in your group chats
2. Call your US congressional representative and Senators Moreno and Husted to tell them why you oppose SAVE and how it would impact their constituents.

Do both of those things a **LOT**.

The SAVE Act would disproportionately hurt women, members of the military, and people who live in rural areas, are Black, older, or have disabilities by making it harder, and in some cases impossible, to vote. Millions and millions of Americans could lose their voting rights if this becomes law.

**We cannot– we WILL not– allow that to happen.
Take action to stop the SAVE Act TODAY.**

Resources

- Representative look-up [here](#): Senators Moreno and Husted and call them; tips for calling [here](#).
- Template for Letters to the Editor from the League of Women Voters of the US [here](#)
- Action Alert from the League of Women Voters of the US [here](#): this links to a message to send your Ohio Congressperson and Senators Moreno and Husted
- Action Alert from the League of Women Voters of Ohio [here](#): this links to a different message to send your Ohio Congressperson and Senators Moreno and Husted
- Social media to share from League of Women Voters of Ohio [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) (these are also on Instagram, if that's your preferred platform). Share these in your personal social media and in group texts with friends, family, and co-workers.

From the League of Women Voters of Ohio, updated April 11, 2025