

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

What is the SAVE America Act?

The SAVE (Safeguard American Voter Eligibility) America 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 to change or update their voter registration to vote in federal elections. This bill would also require new photo ID requirements for federal elections, and requires states to turn their voter rolls over to the Department of Homeland Security. This bill passed in the US House February 11, 2026, and will now go to Committee in the US Senate.

You can read the House bill [here](#).

Are the SAVE Act and the SAVE America Act the same?

No. The SAVE America Act is worse.

The SAVE Act, a bill that was passed by the US House in 2025, and a similar version before that in 2024, focuses on new, strict requirements for voter registration that (more below).

The SAVE America Act, introduced in 2026, includes the same strict voter registration restrictions as previous versions of the SAVE Act but adds:

- **photo ID requirements for in-person voting:** voters would be required to provide government-issued photo ID to vote in person; specifically U.S. passports, driver's licenses, state IDs, military IDs and tribal IDs.
- **photo ID requirements for absentee voting:** voters would be required to include a copy of an eligible photo ID both when requesting and submitting an absentee ballot.
- **requirement that states to turn over their voter registration list to the Department of Homeland Security's Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) database:** this database has been shown to have [frequent inaccuracies and inadequate privacy protection](#). The bill would also allow federal agencies to share private information with each other and with the heads of federal departments.

- **criminal penalties, including imprisonment, on election workers for mistakenly registering voters without proof of citizenship:** these penalties would apply even if the individual is a US Citizen.

Why is the SAVE America Act bad?

To start, it's important to know **these requirements are wholly unnecessary**, as citizenship is already verified by election officials in every state 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 narrow kinds of accepted ID would make registering to vote difficult, if not impossible, for millions of eligible voters.

- **Documentary Proof of Citizenship (DPOC) needs to show citizenship on its face**—the document must explicitly say the holder is a citizen. For the overwhelming majority of Americans, documentation would be **limited to birth certificates, passports, and naturalization certificates only**.
- **REAL ID cards in most states would not be accepted:** In all but 5 states ([Michigan](#), [Minnesota](#), [New York](#), [Vermont](#), and [Washington](#)), REAL ID cards don't show citizenship. Driver's licenses, state-issued IDs, and US Veterans ID would also not be accepted.

If an eligible voter doesn't have a passport and their name doesn't match their birth certificate or naturalization papers, the process for deciding voter eligibility is left to the state. What that would actually look like is unclear.

- **States can make their own rules about what kind of additional documentation is required to prove the voter's identity, but there are no standards for what that would be:** 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. Election officials are allowed to offer voters who bring DPOC that doesn't match their name the chance to sign an affidavit attesting they are the same person, but *they don't have to* and many states will not.
- **Whatever a state decides has to go through legal channels, which can take a long time and leave many eligible voters behind:** If there's an election before Ohio passes a new law to address this, countless Ohioans could be denied their constitutional right to vote.

SAVE America Act would only allow voter registration in person with an election official. If the SAVE America Act becomes law, eligible voters could only register or re-register in person, and only election officials would be able to register or re-register them.

- **This would effectively end voter registration by mail, online voter registration, and community voter drives:** Eligible voters would be banned from registering or updating their voter registration by mail, through community registration drives at schools, churches, and public events, 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 America was passed into law today, the only place in Ohio where people could register or re-register would be county Boards of Elections:** Ohio has only one per county.

Who would the SAVE America Act impact?

Women

- Many women will be unable to get the documents needed to prove citizenship: it costs money and time to get these records, and for some women, these documents may simply not be available.
- More than [3/4 of women in the US change their name when they get married](#).
- There are more than [3.5 million women in Ohio who are or have been married](#).

Rural Ohioans

- [Rural Americans are almost twice as likely as urban Americans to lack access to a birth certificate or passport](#).
- 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.
- [About 1/4 of Ohio's population is in rural parts of the state](#): that's nearly 3 million people.

Older Ohioans

- Those in assisted living facilities or those who no longer drive may not be able to get to their county Board of Elections.
- 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..
- [Ohio is home to than 2 million people aged 65 years and older.](#)

Ohioans with disabilities

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

Black Ohioans

- [Black Americans are almost twice as likely as white Americans to lack access to a birth certificate or passport.](#)
- [2/3s of Black Americans do not have a US 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.](#)

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 officials, workers, volunteers, and all Ohioans

- [Election workers are already overworked and underpaid.](#)
- The SAVE America Act would require billions of dollars for education campaigns, staff and volunteer training, and changes for forms, public-facing platforms, and signage, but it allocates \$0 to pay for these changes. States (meaning taxpayers) would be stuck with the bill.

- 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. Having fewer election workers makes our elections less safe.

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

- This bill passed in the US House February 11, 2026, and will now go to Committee in the US 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 America Act?

Two things:

1. Tell everybody– talk about it, share in your social media, put info in your group chats
2. Call 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 America Act would disproportionately hurt women, members of the military, and people who live in rural areas, are Black, older, students, or have disabilities by making it harder, and in some cases impossible, to vote. Millions and millions of eligible voters in America could lose their voting rights if this becomes law.

We cannot– we WILL not– allow that to happen.

Take action to stop the SAVE America Act TODAY.

Resources

- **Congressional look-up** [here](#): Find contacts for Senators Moreno and Husted and call them; tips for calling [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

- **Social media to share from** League of Women Voters of Ohio [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 February 24, 2026

