



Research Memo

February 2012

Election Legislation 2012: Threats and Opportunities Assessment

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Ever since the surge in participation that made the 2008 electorate one of the most genuinely representative in American history, we have seen a legislative attack on voting rights designed to make it harder, not easier, for Americans to vote. These attacks became especially aggressive in 2011, with an almost unprecedented selection of harmful legislation moving through state legislatures across the country. In 2011, dozens of state legislatures introduced laws to impose voter ID or proof-of-citizenship requirements on voters and would-be voters. Several more states pushed bills to hinder or eliminate existing laws that make it easier to vote, such as early voting or Election Day registration. Simultaneously, several other states passed laws that make it nearly impossible for community-based organizations to do the important work of helping eligible Americans register to vote.

Now, with presidential primaries underway and the 2012 general election fast approaching, lawmakers continue to flood the legislatures and courts with controversial election reforms that could quash voter participation in November. These restrictive laws are inevitably sold under the guise of combating “voter fraud,” and, across the country, secretaries of state have exacerbated this voter fraud hysteria by spreading unsubstantiated stories of illegal voting by noncitizens.¹ However, as Attorney General Eric Holder said this past December in a speech on voting rights, “those on all sides of this debate have acknowledged that in-person voting fraud is uncommon.” The real impact of these harmful laws is to create barriers to voting, particularly for low-income citizens, young Americans, and people of color.

However, public awareness of these voter suppression efforts and their dangers rose in 2011, and this year we are seeing an encouraging trend of lawmakers fighting to turn those laws around. An increasing number of bills have been introduced that could undo some of the damage done to our democratic process in 2011. From a federal bill that outright prohibits states from overstepping federal election law with restrictive voter ID requirements, to state bills that restore early voting days, lawmakers are trying to do right by voters.

This year, Project Vote is monitoring election legislation in the 46 convening state legislatures and the U.S. Congress. This memo reviews both the threats and opportunities represented by election legislation that has been introduced in the state legislatures and Congress in 2012, based on our bill monitoring project, discussions with state-based advocates, recent media coverage, and the partisan makeup of the legislatures and state election directors.

Threats to Voting Rights

Voter ID

In 2011, eight states enacted voter ID laws, including Alabama, Kansas, Mississippi, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin. This year, at least 16 more state legislatures are considering photo ID bills, and more are expected to emerge as the 2012 legislative session progresses.

Due to their history of discrimination against voters of color, South Carolina, Mississippi, and Texas were not allowed to implement their new laws until they were reviewed and approved by the Department of Justice, as required by Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. On December 23, 2011, South Carolina's voter ID bill was rejected for potentially having the impact of disproportionately forcing minority voters to obtain the required ID to continue to exercise their right to vote. In March, the Justice Department is expected to announce its decision on approval of the Texas and Mississippi laws.ⁱⁱ

Despite criticism from election clerks, advocates, and voters, Republican lawmakers in Iowa and New Mexico have publicly announced their intent to reintroduce voter ID bills in their respective states. In Iowa, the Republican Party was questioned why it did not impose a photo ID requirement on its own voters at the Republican Caucus in January. Although Secretary of State Matt Schultz could not answer that question on behalf of the Republican Party, he did confirm that the legislature plans to consider a new voter ID bill this session.ⁱⁱⁱ

New Mexico Rep. Dianne Hamilton announced plans to reintroduce voter ID this session, claiming that it is at the "public's insistence." However, the odds of a bill gaining public support appear slim.^{iv} The League of Women Voters, along with 33 county election clerks, and "ordinary citizens" (who testified against Hamilton's 2011 voter ID bill) publicly oppose a voter ID law because it would create "obstacles for disabled people and old people who rarely get out but always vote."^v On January 19, New Mexico Rep. Cathrynn Brown introduced a photo ID bill, HB 113. It is pending in the House committees on Consumer and Public Affairs; Judiciary; and Voters and Elections.

Nebraska's LB 239, was recently pulled from the legislative agenda after a coalition of civil and voting rights groups spoke out against the bill's merits. However, voter ID remains a top priority for the bill's sponsor, Sen. Charlie Janssen, who allegedly pulled the bill "because he wants more time to counter misinformation from opponents," according to an *Omaha World-Herald* report.^{vi}

Mississippi circumnavigated its legislative process by putting voter ID on the ballot as a constitutional amendment, and now Minnesota may follow in Mississippi's footsteps after a bill failed to gain Gov. Mark Dayton's approval in 2011. "That's why they've introduced legislation that would bypass Dayton and allow voters to make the change through a constitutional amendment," according to Minnesota Public Radio. "Governors cannot veto constitutional amendments."^{vii}

North Carolina lawmakers are also trying to pass voter ID over the governor's objections. Last year, Gov. Bev Perdue vetoed a voter ID bill, HB 351. Members of the House unsuccessfully tried to override the governor's veto twice: once in July 2011 and again in early January. They may pick up the bill again in February.

Newly implemented photo ID laws are also facing challenges in Tennessee and Wisconsin. Nashville attorneys are reportedly putting together a lawsuit that could challenge the voter ID law unless legislators reconsider this session. While there are several new Tennessee bills that are designed to remove or at least reduce the impact of the voter ID law's provisions, state officials who support the law say they do not expect any changes to be made.

"There are multiple problems with our state law," Nashville lawyer Gerard Stranch told the *Tennessean* in early January. "It's not just that it would have a disparate effect on minorities. It's setting up a poll tax."

An advocacy group, Tennessee Citizen Action, also began organizing a petition to repeal the state law in December 2011.

In Wisconsin, the ACLU and the League of Women Voters filed separate lawsuits to challenge the state's new photo ID law. In their suit against Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker and state election officials, the League of Women Voters argues that the law discriminates against minorities and disabled people who are less likely to possess ID. Dane County Circuit Court Judge Richard Niess in Madison heard arguments from both sides on January 19, but did not rule.^{viii} Niess plans to make a decision on the case on March 9.^{ix}

Voter ID

- **Alaska – HB 162:** This bill requires all voters at the polls to show photo identification to vote. It provides free ID for certain voters.
- **Delaware – LD 199, LD 200:** This is the first step towards a constitutional amendment to allow the General Assembly to enact laws relating to requiring photographic and signature identification to vote.
- **Florida – HB 4129:** This bill repeals a provision that prohibits clerks or inspectors from asking an elector to provide additional information, or recite the elector's home address, after presenting picture identification that matches elector's address in supervisor of elections' records.
- **Illinois – HB 3058:** This bill requires all voters to present photo ID before voting in person, and directs the secretary of state to provide voter ID cards for certain voters. The ID would show a voter's name, signature, photograph, state seal, and current address, and cannot be used for anything but voting in Illinois. To receive a Voter Identification card, a voter must provide documents that show photo, name, date of birth, residence, and evidence of voter registration status. Certain non-photo documents are also accepted. Voters with religious objections to being photographed, and voters who are indigent and cannot pay for the Voter Identification Card, would be allowed to sign an affidavit and vote a provisional ballot. Anyone else who does not present ID may vote provisionally, but must present ID to the county clerk within 10 days of an election.
- **Illinois – HB 3093/SB 2035:** These bills require voters to present government-issued, valid, photo ID before voting.
- **Iowa – HB 8, HB 95, and SB 142:** These bills require all voters to show proof of identification before being allowed to vote at the polls. They force the voter to cast a provisional ballot if the voter is unable to provide, or refuses to provide, the required proof of identification.
- **Maine – L 199:** This bill requires that a voter provide proof of identity with photograph identification approved by the secretary of state by rule for the purpose of voting.
- **Minnesota – SF 1577 and SF 1578:** This bill proposes an amendment to be voted on during the 2012 general election. The question would ask voters if the state constitution should be amended to require all voters to present an approved form of photo ID before voting.
- **Missouri – HB 1104 and SB 442:** These bills would require voters to present photo ID before voting. They exempt disabled voters, certain religious voters, and voters who were born before 1941 from the ID requirement, but those exempted voters would have to sign an affidavit and vote a provisional ballot. House Bill 1104 further exempts anyone who is unable to pay for a birth certificate or other document necessary to obtain photo ID.
- **Nebraska – LB 239:** This bill requires voters to present government-issued photo ID before voting. Accepted ID includes state ID or driver's license or U.S. ID that shows the voter's name, photo, and an expiration date that has not passed. Voters who do not present ID would be forced to vote provisional ballots, and provide proof of identity to their county clerk within 10 days of an election. Voters who are indigent or have a religious objection to being photographed would be allowed to cast a provisional ballot. Free IDs will be provided to voters who indicate that they are indigent and need a state ID. Early voters

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and absentee voters would not be required to provide proof of identity. Nursing home residents are also exempt from the requirement.

- **New Hampshire – HB 289, SB 318:** This bill requires that a voter present a valid photo identification to vote in person. Voters without photo identification may sign a challenged voter affidavit. Beginning in 2016, the challenged voter affidavit would include a photograph of the voter. Voters who do not present valid photo identification would be mailed and instructed to return an identity verification letter. This bill also requires that the secretary of state pay the cost for a non-driver's picture identification card upon presentation of a voucher to the division of motor vehicles.
- **New Jersey – HB A 674/S 200:** This bill requires voters to present photographic, current, valid, government-issued proof of identity in order to cast a regular ballot. Mail-in ballots must include a copy of the required ID. Voters who have a religious objection to being photographed would be allowed to vote by machine if they establish their religious objection by a sworn, notarized affidavit from their religious leader. A free, non-driver identification card would be provided to voters who prove indigence.
- **New Mexico – HB 113:** This bill requires voters to present government issued, current, and valid photo ID to vote. The bill requires at least two members of the precinct board to determine that the voter's form of ID matches the registration information. Student ID and tribal enrollment numbers are acceptable forms of ID. Absentee voters are also required to submit a copy of the required ID or be handled as a provisional ballot. Free ID is available to applicants who are at least 75 years of age or applicants who will be 18 years old on the date of the next general election. These applicants must sign a statement requesting free ID for voter identification purposes.
- **New York – AB 9041:** This bill requires voters to present valid and current, government-issued photo ID to vote. Accepted forms of voter identification include New York state driver's license or non-driver ID, U.S. passport, student ID, military ID, or a government-issued medical card or ID card. Voters who do not have ID may cast an affidavit ballot, and the local board of elections would determine the validity of the ballot.
- **Pennsylvania – HB 934:** This bill creates a photo ID provision for voting. Registered voters must provide a document that shows a name that matches the voter's record, an expiration date, and a photo. The expiration date requirement is waived for voters presenting military ID, university ID, identification from a care facility, or another ID issued by the government or commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Identification issued by the Department of Transportation is accepted up to one year past the expiration date. Absentee voters must provide a copy of the required ID; absentee voters without required ID may provide the last four digits of their Social Security numbers. Voters with a religious objection to being photographed may present their non-photo IDs that are issued by the Department of Transportation. The commonwealth will issue an ID card at no cost to a registered voter who has declared under oath or affirmation that she does not have the required ID to vote. The Secretary of the Commonwealth will prepare and disseminate information to the public regarding voter ID requirements.
- **Virginia – HB 1:** This bill eliminates the provision that allows a voter to sign a sworn statement that he is the named registered voter he claims to be in lieu of showing identification, and provides instead for the voter to cast a provisional ballot if he cannot provide a required form of identification. The bill also provides that, in order to determine whether a person who cast a provisional ballot is a qualified voter, an electoral board may rely on a faxed copy
- **Virginia – HB 9:** This bill would amend current election law relating to voter ID to force voters who cannot prove identity to vote by provisional ballot. Currently accepted ID includes a voter registration card, Social Security card, valid Virginia driver's license (or any other government ID), or employee ID. The bill directs the State Board of Elections to determine how to count such provisional ballots.
- **Virginia – HB 569:** This bill requires voter registrants to present proof of citizenship to register to vote

and photographic proof of identity to cast a ballot. Accepted citizenship documents include birth certificate, United States passport, naturalization documents, or Bureau of Indian Affairs card. Any application that is not accompanied with a legible photocopy of a citizenship document would be rejected. The bill restricts the list of accepted verification methods to valid, government-issued photo ID. If a voter does not present ID, she will be offered a provisional ballot. The State Board of Elections is required to "provide instructions to the electoral boards for the handling and counting of such provisional ballots."

- **Virginia – HB S 55:** This omnibus bill would remove the provision that allows a voter to sign an affidavit in the event that the voter does not have ID required under the Help America Vote Act.
- **West Virginia – HB 3219:** The purpose of this bill is to require voters to provide a photo ID when voting.

Restrictive Voter Registration Bills

State legislatures are considering legislation that directly targets those seeking to register to vote and the groups that help them get on the voter rolls.

In 2011, proof of citizenship laws gained traction in a few states, despite legal challenges of existing laws in Georgia and Arizona, a proven history of disenfranchising otherwise eligible voters, and an unsavory connection to anti-immigration laws. Out of the nine states that introduced proof of citizenship bills, Alabama and Kansas were the only states to adopt such policies. The Alabama Immigration Act is under review by the Justice Department, while Kansas lawmakers are now pushing to implement the law in time to have an impact on the 2012 presidential election.^x (The new law is not supposed to take effect until 2013.) Currently, at least six states are considering legislation to require proof of citizenship at registration.

Millions of Americans rely on community-run voter registration drives to register to vote.^{xi} However, state lawmakers have increasingly introduced measures to prevent these groups from successfully reaching their communities by way of restrictive deadlines and excessive fines, among other undue hurdles. At least four states are currently considering bills that would severely hinder voter registration drives.

Proof of Citizenship

- **Kansas – HB 2437:** This bill expedites the implementation of KSA 2011 Supp. 25-2309, a law requiring voter registrants to provide proof of citizenship. Instead of taking effect on January 1, 2013, new registrants would need to comply beginning June 15, 2012.
- **Massachusetts – HB 194:** This bill requires voter registration applications to prove, "to the satisfaction of the Clerk or Registrar," that he or she is a United States citizen. "Such proof may be made by producing a birth certificate or papers of naturalization for inspection, notation of which shall be made a part of the registration of said applicant."
- **Michigan – HB 5221:** This bill requires voter registration applicants to submit evidence of United States citizenship when registering to vote at a government agency. Acceptable proof of citizenship includes a legible copy of the applicant's birth certificate, a U.S. passport, naturalization documents, or Bureau of Indian Affairs card number. Anyone registered before the enactment date of this bill would not be required to submit proof of citizenship.
- **New Hampshire – HB 515:** This bill eliminates the option to use an affidavit to prove identity or citizenship. This bill also requires the clerk to verify the identity of persons requesting absentee ballots.
- **South Carolina – SB 304:** This bill requires voter registrants to submit documentary proof of citizenship to be registered to vote.

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- **Virginia – HB 569, HB 828, HB 895:** These bills require voter registrants to provide documentary proof of citizenship to register to vote, and photo ID to vote at the polls. To register to vote, registrants may present a legible photocopy of a birth certificate, United States passport, naturalization papers, or Bureau of Indian Affairs card number. To vote at the polls, voters must present a government issued photo ID that shows their current name, address, and expiration date that has not passed.

Restrictions on Voter Registration Drives

- **Missouri – SB 486:** This bill requires individuals who request 50 or more voter registration applications to provide the secretary of state with their name, address, phone number, whether they are working for a group or organization, and a description of that group. The bill makes it a Class B felony to knowingly sign a name other than one's own name to a voter registration application. The secretary would be required to provide "computer-based" registration training to individuals requesting voter registration applications.
- **Missouri – SB 1263:** This bill requires anyone requesting 10 or more voter registration applications to provide certain information to the Office of the Secretary of State. The secretary is required to provide training for every person who will distribute voter registration applications. The bill also establishes criminal punishment for providing false information to obtain registration cards or signing a fraudulent name on a registration card.
- **Mississippi – SB 2057:** This bill requires organizations conducting voter registration drives to file an annual registration statement with the secretary of state before engaging in voter registration activities. It also requires such groups or individuals to file an annual report "containing a list of all applications for voter registration solicited or collected" throughout the year. The secretary of state would be authorized to assess fines for: failure to file registration statements or the annual report; for failure to submit applications to the appropriate registrar; and for failure to turn in applications within 10 days. This bill also prohibits compensation for the number of applications collected "or on any other volume basis."
- **New York – AB 5626/SB 1125:** This bill provides that a person may not be compensated based upon the number of signed voter registration cards he or she collects.
- **South Carolina - HB 4549:** This bill defines "third-party organization" and sets restrictions for conducting voter registration drives. Third-party groups would be required to provide the State Election Commission with identifying information, including the name and address the organization, the organization's registered agent, and each canvasser. The organization must also provide a sworn statement from each canvasser—whether an employee or volunteer—to obey all state laws regarding registration of voters. The State Election Commission would provide voter registration forms to third-party groups that include the groups' identifying information. The Commission would maintain a database of all third-party voter registration groups and the voter registration forms assigned to them. Applications must be submitted within 48 hours after the applicant completes it or face a fine of \$50 per application. Fines go up to \$1,000 if a group "acted willfully" in turning in applications late. The State Election Commission may waive the fines, or pursue civil action by reporting it to the Attorney General. The State Election Commission is authorized to adopt regulations relating to voter registration drives.

Opportunities in Voting Rights

Bills to Reverse Effects of Bad Election Laws

The attack on voting rights in 2011, which resulted in a slew of regressive laws in several states, is now under scrutiny. Voters and advocates have challenged these laws—including voter ID, voter registration drive restrictions, and early voting reductions—through petitions and legal challenges. Now, lawmakers are introducing legislation that could potentially get to the heart of the matter, indicating a promising trend as the session progresses.

- **United States Congress – HR 3316:** This bill amends the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to prohibit a state or local election official from requiring an individual to present a photo identification as a condition for casting a regular ballot for a federal office. It also prohibits election officials from forcing an individual to cast a provisional ballot on the grounds that the individual does not present photo ID.
- **Florida – SB 1636/HB 1189:** This bill would make several amendments to election law relating to voter registration drives. The bill increases the amount of time that third-party voter registration organizations have to turn in complete applications from 48 hours to 10 days. The bill deletes a provision that allows the secretary of state to refer matters to the attorney general for civil action if the secretary thinks that a third-party voter registration drive has violated the law. The bill also increases the time for early voting from 10 days to 15 days before a state or federal election and ending on the second day before the election. The bill also allows voters who had recently moved to vote in their new precinct after signing an affidavit.
- **Georgia – HB 707:** This bill allows voters to use valid, photographic student ID from an eligible postsecondary institution to vote.
- **Rhode Island – HB 7219:** This bill fully removes the requirement to present photographic, government-issued proof of identification to vote.
- **Tennessee – HB 2139/SB 2176 and SB 2504:** These bills remove the requirement that a voter needs photo identification to vote. They restore the former requirement that a voter present identification for purpose of comparing signature on the application for ballot.
- **Tennessee – HB 2178 and HB 2241:** This bill recognizes, as evidence of identification to vote, a valid employee identification card issued by a Tennessee municipality or county, provided the identification card contains a photograph of the voter.
- **Tennessee – HB 2242/SB 2379:** This bill allows student identification cards, issued by institutions of higher education in the state, to verify a person's identification to vote.
- **Wisconsin – SB 247:** This bill exempts voters who are at least 65 years of age from the state's photo voter ID requirement.
- **Wisconsin - SB 323:** This bill allows a person to obtain a free birth certificate for one year following the effective date of the bill if a person needs the birth certificate in order to obtain an ID card for the purpose of voting.
- **Wisconsin – AB 460:** This bill permits any photo identification card issued by a university or college, or by a technical college that is part of the state technical college system, to be used as proof of identification if the card contains the name of the person to whom it is issued. Under the bill, the card need not contain a date of issuance or expiration date and no proof of current enrollment is required to be presented by the holder of the card.

Beneficial Voter Registration Reforms

Ways to make voter registration more accessible have long been proposed, with strong support for same-day registration policies and online voter registration. While these policies remain popular, some states are considering other ways to improve the means of getting voters on the rolls (and keeping the rolls up-to-date).

After Maine lawmakers attempted to take Election Day registration (EDR) from its voters last year—an effort they lost to a people’s veto—Election Day registration appears to be making a comeback. Six states and the United States Congress are considering variations of EDR. The California Assembly adopted an EDR bill in 2011, but it stalled in the Senate. The 2012 bill—which instead allows citizens to register to vote after the official deadline and vote a provisional ballot—may stand a chance. Arizona’s take on EDR, HB 2229, has also advanced on the House floor.

Online voter registration policies continue to gain traction: in 2011, policies were adopted in California, Maryland, and Nevada, though none of them appear to be implemented as of January 2012. At least three more states are currently proposing online voter registration policies. While we applaud the innovation of making voter registration easily accessible to citizens through modern technology, it is important to remember that there are risks that come with registration systems that rely on an individual voter’s access to a computer and possession of a driver’s license.

Both Election Day registration and online voter registration policies rely on the voter to ensure she is enfranchised. While these policies are consistently introduced year-after-year, another trend in voter registration accessibility is emerging.

In a highly mobile society, existing voter registration laws—and even voter rolls—are often outdated. Lawmakers are picking up on the idea that voter registration status should follow voters as they move, get married, or change their names. Paperless registration—a process that updates the state’s voter rolls through a government agency’s database—is under consideration in Washington, Maryland, New Mexico, and New York. New York also introduced an unusual bill, the “Universal Jurisdiction Voting Act” (AB 8633/SB 5236) that would automatically transfer a voter’s registration to wherever they move in the state, even if they move to a new county.

Additionally, New York is proposing bills to provide more public agencies where citizens may fill out and turn in voter registration forms.

Paperless Registration

- **Maryland – HB 173:** This bill allows an applicant registering to vote at a voter registration agency to consent to use an electronic copy of her signature that will be transmitted to the State Board within five days.
- **New Mexico – HB 92:** This bill provides for the electronic registration of voter applicants who apply for a driver's license or state ID at motor vehicles offices. The secretary of state is required to work with the motor vehicles division to ensure compliance with the National Voter Registration Act.
- **New York – AB 1712:** The "Automatic Voter Registration Act" requires the Dept. of Motor Vehicles and Dept. of Taxation and Finance to transmit the names and addresses of voting eligible citizens to the State Board of Elections so that these people will be automatically registered to vote. The bill directs the State Board of Elections to study the feasibility of using other state and local records as a means of automatically registering voters.
- **Washington – HB 2203/SB 6129:** This bill allows driver's license and state identicard applications to serve as applications for voter registration purposes. The applicant for a driver's license or state identicard may decline, in writing, to be registered to vote. A change of address form submitted to the Dept. of Licensing would serve as a notification of change-of-address for voter registration purposes, unless the registrant states on the form that the change-of-address is not for voter registration purposes. Applications for

voter registration received under these circumstances would be electronically transferred to the secretary of state and would be considered a registration by mail.

Voter Registration Agencies

- **New York – AB 813:** This bill designates state and city universities of New York as voter registration agencies, providing voter registration forms and assistance to students. The bill permits independent institutions to do the same upon request, and requires SUNY and CUNY independent institutions to offer each applicant an application for an absentee ballot.
- **New York – AB 1685:** This bill designates several public agencies as voter registration agencies, including libraries, local housing authorities, and high schools. The bill directs the State Board of Elections to provide rules and regulations for implementation.

Online Voter Registration

- **Georgia – SB 325:** This bill provides online voter registration opportunities for voters who have electronic signatures stored in the Dept. of Driver Services.
- **Nebraska – LB 168:** This bill allows eligible citizens who have a valid state ID to register to vote on the secretary of state's Web site.
- **New York – AB 8632/SB 5237:** This bill requires the Board of Elections to accept voter registrations electronically through its Web site.

Election Day Registration

- **United States Congress – HR 3317:** This bill amends the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to require states with a voter registration requirement to make same-day voter registration available at the polling place on Election Day or during the early voting period.
- **Arizona – HB 2229:** This bill provides satellite voting and registration locations at the county recorders' offices. Satellite voting and registration locations allow any voter who lives in the county and who had registered to vote 29 days before Election Day to vote early. It also allows county residents to register and vote a provisional ballot during the early voting period after providing proof of citizenship.
- **California – AB 1436:** This bill allows “conditional” voter registration and casting of provisional ballots after the registration deadline.
- **Georgia – SB 326:** This bill allows a person to register to vote and cast a provisional ballot on the day of a primary or general election, or during the early voting period.
- **Nebraska – LB 605:** This bill allows a person who has not registered to vote in her county of residence to register and vote on Election Day. The voter must provide photographic proof of identification and residence at her polling place.
- **Washington – HB 2204/SB 6127:** This bill allows a person to register to vote on Election Day through the county auditor. It sets the online voter registration deadline for eight days before an election.
- **New York – AB 1684:** This bill allows qualified voters who have never previously registered to vote to register on any day that the board of elections is open, including Election Day.

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- **New York – AB 6421/SB 1769:** This bill allows citizens who are not registered in New York to register to vote at a polling place in their jurisdiction on any day of an election. The registrant must provide identification that includes a current address. The new registrant would be allowed to vote by "affidavit ballot," which will not be counted until election officials determine the registrant's residence and eligibility to vote.

Youth Voting

Youth voter engagement measures gained popularity following the surge in youth voter turnout in 2008. However, the interest in policies that engage young people in the political process appears to have waned somewhat. Currently, civic education and preregistration policies are under consideration in a few states.

Washington's 2012 bill to allow 16- and 17-year-old citizens to preregister to vote gained traction in the House with the support of young voters, including Lucas Barash-David, who testified in favor of the bill in January.

"I know, for myself and many of my friends, we got our driver's licenses at 16 and I'm only 18, I'm probably not going to go back until I'm 21. And I would have jumped on the opportunity to register to vote."

Opponents of the bill include the Washington auditor and Republican Secretary of State Sam Reed, who claim that the plan would "cost too much money and that it's too difficult to track kids when they move to an out-of-state college."^{xii} It is unclear how the policy would be costly to the state since preregistration policies tend to require few administrative changes, including updating voter registration forms and information voter registration agencies of the new policy.^{xiii}

Preregistration

- **Iowa – SB 3093:** This bill allows for the preregistration of 16-year-old citizens.
- **Washington – HB 2205/SB 6128:** This bill allows 16-year-old citizens to preregister to vote with the office of the secretary of state.
- **New Jersey – SB 2727, SB 526:** These bills permit voter registration of 17-year-old citizens for voting at the next election occurring on or after their 18th birthday.
- **New York – AB 8631 and AB 1228/SB 542:** These bills provide voter registration forms to students by colleges, universities and public school districts and allows 17-year-old citizens to preregister to vote.
- **New York – AB 7770/SB 5038:** This bill allows 17-year-old citizens to preregister to vote.

Civic Education

- **Florida – HB 1113/SB 350:** This bill requires the supervisor of elections to conduct a high school voter registration and education program in each public high school of the county.
- **South Carolina – SB 547:** This bill requires the State Dept. of Education and State Election Commission to ensure all 17-year-old high school students have the opportunity to complete a voter registration form. Students must learn of the importance of voting in class or in a manner decided by the local school board. Students have the opportunity to opt-out of the registration process for religious or philosophical reasons. The bill also requires the State Election Commission to provide voter registration cards to citizens who have completed a prison sentence.

Restoration of Voting Rights

Four million Americans living in our communities are barred from having a voice in the democratic process because of a past felony conviction. For the last several sessions, lawmakers on the state and federal level have fought to rectify this issue and give these Americans their voices back.

In December 2011, a coalition of voting and civil rights organizations, including Project Vote, urged members of Congress to support the Democracy Restoration Act of 2011.

“The United States is one of the few western democratic nations that excludes such large numbers of people from the democratic process,” the groups note in a letter to members of Congress. “Congressional action is needed to restore voting rights in federal elections to the millions of Americans who have been released from incarceration, but continue to be denied their ability to fully participate in civic life.”

The federal bill has been read twice in the Senate and is pending in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

On the state level, two states are considering bills to automatically restore the voting rights of people convicted of felonies after they have completed certain terms of their sentences.

- **United States Congress – S 2017:** This bill would restore voting rights in federal elections to people who are out of prison and living in their communities.
- **Virginia – HJ 17:** This bill authorizes the General Assembly to provide by general law for the restoration of civil rights for people convicted of felonies who have completed service of their sentence, including any period or condition of probation, parole, or suspension of sentence.
- **Virginia – HB 16, HB 1098:** This bill provides for the automatic restoration of civil rights to people convicted of nonviolent felonies—excluding drug or election-related felonies—upon completion of sentence, including any term of probation or parole, and the payment of all restitution, fines, costs, and fees assessed as a result of the felony conviction.
- **Wisconsin – AB 444, SB 329:** This bill restores voting rights to people who have been released from incarceration. It requires the jailer to provide the person with a notice of voting rights restoration and a voter registration card, if the person lived in the state at the time of conviction. A person released on parole may resume voting.

Deceptive Practices

Dirty tricks or deceptive practices—the practice of purposely giving false voting information to prevent people from voting—are all too common during election season.

In December, Paul Schurick, a political aid to former Maryland's Gov. Robert Elrich, was found guilty of four counts of election law violations after ordering robocalls that targeted Black voters during the 2010 midterm election. The calls told them not to go to the polls. Around the same time, Attorney General Eric Holder also spoke out against voter suppression efforts in a noted speech to commemorate the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

"As the nation prepares for another historic election, this is the right time to send a strong message that campaigns must end their dirty tricks," said Project Vote Executive Director Michael Slater.^{xiv}

In the same month, the "Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act of 2011" was introduced to outlaw deceptive communications that occur within 90 days before an election.

"Project Vote is hopeful that the Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act of 2011 will become a new tool for combating attacks on voters as we work to ensure expanded voter participation," said Slater. "Our democracy works best when every American participates."

Opportunities in Voting Rights

- **United States Congress – S 1994:** This bill prohibits anyone from knowingly communicating misinformation to voters within 90 days of an Election for the purpose of deterring, hindering, or preventing another person from exercising the right to vote.
- **Wisconsin – AB 393, SB 311:** This bill prohibits any person from engaging in voter intimidation tactics on Election Day. It blocks anyone from posing as law enforcement or an immigration officer or implying that law enforcement is present in an effort to intimidate voters.
- **New York – AB 5915/SB 1009:** This bill makes it a civil violation to knowingly communicate false information regarding an election—such as time, place, or manner of an election—in an effort to deter a person from exercising his or her right to vote.

Convenience Voting

The election year may have inspired the recent introduction of convenience voting measures in state legislatures. Early voting, for example, is being considered in two states (and enhanced in one). Whereas in sessions past, early voting was merely attached to restrictive voter ID laws in order to gain mass appeal in the legislature, lawmakers are now keeping the issues separate. All-mail ballot elections are also picking up interest in Washington, New Jersey, and San Diego County, California.

Although Vote by Mail policies have been credited with higher voter turnout and lower election costs, such policies are also criticized for their dependency on a sometimes unreliable source—the United State Postal Service—and their susceptibility to fraudulent activity. A study commissioned by the Pew Center on the States also found that all-mail elections reduce voter turnout overall by 13.2 percent, and dramatically reduce turnout among urban voters and voters of color.^{xv}

Both early voting and vote by mail policies boast some popularity among certain sets of voters. For example, Black voters in 2008 favored early voting over mail voting, with a quarter choosing to vote early compared to just 17 percent voting by mail. The numbers were inverted for White voters, who favored mail voting by 24 percent.^{xvi}

Early Voting

- **Florida – HB 1079/SB 516:** This bill enhances early voting in Florida. It expands the list of available early voting sites and requires each county to operate the same number of early voting sites that it used in the 2008 general election. It expands the number of early voting days from 10 days before an election to 15, ending on the second day before an election. During special elections, this bill requires early voting to begin on the eighth day before an election, ending the second day before Election Day. Early voting must be provided 12 hours per weekday and 12 hours total over the weekend.
- **Mississippi – SB 2163:** This bill provides early voting in the state. It requires the registrar to open precincts that serve at least 500 qualified voters on the two Saturdays before each election.
- **New York – AB 293 and AB 4120:** The "Early Voting Act" would establish early voting in the state of New York, beginning no earlier than 14 business days before an election, and ending on the day before and election.
- **New York – AB 4551:** This bill allows any person to vote early in a general election, starting no sooner than 20 days before an election, and no later than five days prior to Election Day.

Vote by Mail

- **California – SB 304:** This bill amends election law to allow San Diego County to conduct all-mail ballot elections until 2016.
- **Washington – HB 1002:** This bill would implement all-mail elections in the state of Washington. The bill also limits precinct sizes to not more than 2,000 active registered voters.
- **New Jersey – AB 4389:** This bill allows a voter registrant to request to be provided with a mail-in ballot in all elections until the voter requests to discontinue receiving mail ballots.

Conclusion

The war on voting continues in 2012, as partisans introduce or fight for new, regressive election laws that exclude voters from having a voice in our democracy. However, it is encouraging to see—in this important election year—that voters and lawmakers are fighting back with proposals to block regressive laws, ban deceptive practices, and make voting accessible to all eligible citizens.

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Appendix I:

Election Legislation Threats

Alaska

Photo ID

Status: PENDING

HB 162: Requires all voters at the polls to show photo identification to vote.

Delaware

Photo ID

Status: PENDING

LD 199, LD 200: Constitutional amendment to allow the General Assembly to enact laws relating to requiring photographic and signature identification to vote.

Florida

Photo ID

Status: PENDING

HB 4129: Repeals provision that prohibits clerk or inspector from asking elector to provide additional information to vote.

Illinois

Photo ID

Status: PENDING

HB 3058: Requires all voters to present photo ID before voting in person and directs the secretary of state to provide voter ID cards for certain voters.

Photo ID

Status: PENDING

HB 3093/SB 2035: Require voters to present government-issued, valid, photo ID before voting.

Iowa

Photo ID

Status: PENDING

HB 8, HB 95, and SB 142: Require all voters to show proof of identification before being allowed to vote at the polls.

Kansas

Proof of Citizenship

Status: PENDING

HB 2437: Fast-tracks the implementation of KSA 2011 Supp. 25-2309, a law requiring voter registrants to provide proof of citizenship.

Maine

Photo ID

Status: PENDING

L 199: Requires a voter to provide photo ID, as approved by the Secretary of State, to vote.

Massachusetts

Proof of Citizenship

Status: PENDING

HB 194: Requires voter registration applications to prove citizenship.

Michigan

Proof of Citizenship

Status: PENDING

HB 5221: Requires voter registration applicants to submit evidence of United States citizenship when registering to vote at a government agency.

Minnesota

Photo ID

Status: PENDING

SF 1577, SF 1578: Proposes a voter ID amendment to be voted on during the 2012 general election.

Mississippi

Voter Registration Drives

Status: PENDING

SB 2057: Requires voter registration organizations to file an annual registration statement with the state. Creates a deadline to turn in cards. Prohibits compensation for number of applications collected.

Missouri

Photo ID

Status: PENDING

HB 1104 and SB 442: Require voters to present photo ID before voting. Exempt disabled voters, certain religious voters, voters who were born before 1941 from the ID requirement.

Voter Registration Drives

Status: PENDING

SB 486: Requires anyone requesting 50 or more voter registration applications to register with the state and attend training. Establishes criminal penalty for falsifying voter registration cards.

Appendix I: Election Legislation Threats

Voter Registration Drives

Status: PENDING

SB 1263: Requires anyone requesting 10 or more voter registration applications to register with the state and attend training. Establishes criminal penalty for falsifying voter registration cards.

Nebraska

Photo ID

Status: PENDING

LB 239: Requires voters to present government-issued photo ID before voting.

New Hampshire

Photo ID

Status: PENDING

HB 289, SB 318: Requires that a voter present a valid photo identification to vote in person. Voters without photo identification may sign a challenged voter affidavit.

Proof of Citizenship

Status: PENDING

HB 515: Eliminates the option to use an affidavit to prove identity or citizenship.

New Jersey

Photo ID

Status: PENDING

HB A 674/S 200: Requires voters to present photographic, current, valid, government-issued proof of identity in order to vote a regular ballot. Mail-in ballots must include a copy of required ID.

New Mexico

Photo ID

Status: PENDING

HB 113: Requires voters to present government issued, current and valid photo ID to vote. Requires two election officials to determine that the voter's form of ID matches registration information.

New York

Photo ID

Status: PENDING

AB 9041: Requires voters to present valid and current, government-issued photo ID to vote.

Voter Registration Drives

Status: PENDING

AB 5626/SB 1125: Provides that a person may not be compensated based upon the number of signed voter registration cards he or she collects.

Pennsylvania

Photo ID

Status: PENDING

HB 934: Creates a photo ID provision for voting.

South Carolina

Proof of Citizenship

Status: PENDING

SB 304: Requires voter registrants to submit documentary proof of citizenship to be registered to vote.

Voter Registration Drives

Status: PENDING

HB 4549: Defines and creates restrictions on community-based voter registration drives.

Virginia

Photo ID

Status: PENDING

HB 1: Eliminates the provision that allows a voter to sign a sworn statement that he is the named registered voter he claims to be in lieu of showing identification.

Photo ID

Status: PENDING

HB 9: Amends current election law relating to voter ID to force voters who cannot prove identity to vote by provisional ballot.

Photo ID/Proof of Citizenship

Status: PENDING

HB 569: Requires voter registrants to present proof of citizenship to register to vote and photographic proof of identity to cast a ballot."

Photo ID

Status: PENDING

HB S 55: Disallow a voter to sign an affidavit in the event that the voter does not have ID required under the Help America Vote Act.

Proof of Citizenship

Status: PENDING

HB 569, HB 828, HB 895: Require voter registrants to provide documentary proof of citizenship to register to vote and photo ID to vote at the polls.

West Virginia

Photo ID

Status: PENDING

HB 3219: Require voters to provide a photo ID.

Appendix II: Election Legislation Opportunities

United States Congress

Anti-Voter ID

Status: PENDING

HR 3316: Amends the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to prohibit a state or local election official from requiring photo ID to vote.

Election Day Registration

Status: PENDING

HR 3317: Amends the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to require states with a voter registration requirement to make same-day voter registration available at the polling place on Election Day or during the early voting period.

Restoration of Voting Rights

Status: PENDING

S 2017: Restore voting rights in federal elections to people who are out of prison and living in their communities.

Deceptive Practices

Status: PENDING

S 1994: Prohibits anyone from knowingly communicating misinformation to voters within 90 days before an Election for the purpose of deterring, hindering, or preventing another person from exercising the right to vote.

Arizona

Election Day Registration

Status: PENDING

HB 2229: Provides satellite voting and registration locations at the county recorders' offices. Allows county residents to register and vote a provisional ballot during the early voting period after providing proof of citizenship.

California

Election Day Registration

Status: PENDING

AB 1436: Allows "conditional" voter registration and casting of provisional ballots after the registration deadline.

Vote By Mail

Status: PENDING

SB 304: Amends election law to allow San Diego County to conduct all-mail ballot elections until 2016.

Florida

Omnibus

Status: PENDING

SB 1636/HB 1189: Expands number of days voter registration drives have to turn in application. Increases early voting period.

Civic Education

Status: PENDING

HB 1113/SB 350: Requires the supervisor of elections to conduct a high school voter registration and education program in each public high school of the county.

Early Voting

Status: PENDING

HB 1079/SB 516 – Enhances early voting in Florida.

Georgia

Voter ID Expansion

Status: PENDING

HB 707: Allows voters to use valid, photographic student ID from an eligible postsecondary institution to vote.

Online Voter Registration

Status: PENDING

SB 325: This bill provides online voter registration opportunities for voters who have electronic signatures stored in the Dept. of Driver Services.

Election Day Registration

Status: PENDING

SB 326: Allows a person to register to vote and cast a provisional ballot on the day of a primary or general election, or during the early voting period.

Iowa

Preregistration

Status: PENDING

IA SSB 3093: Allows for the preregistration of 16-year-old citizens.

Maryland

Paperless Registration

Status: PENDING

HB 173: Allows an applicant registering to vote at a voter registration agency to consent to use an electronic copy of her signature.

Mississippi

Early Voting

SB 2163: Provides early voting in the state.

Appendix II: Election Legislation Opportunities

Nebraska

Online Voter Registration

Status: PENDING

LB 168: Allows eligible citizens who have a valid state ID to register to vote on the secretary of state's Web site.

Election Day Registration

Status: PENDING

LB 605: Allows a person who has not registered to vote in her county of residence to register and vote on Election Day.

New Jersey

Preregistration

Status: PENDING

SB 2727, SB 526: Permit voter registration of 17-year-old citizens for voting at next election occurring on or after their 18th birthday.

Vote By Mail

Status: PENDING

AB 4389: Allows a voter registrant to request to be provided with a mail-in ballot in all elections until the voter requests to discontinue receiving mail ballots.

New Mexico

Paperless Registration

Status: PENDING

HB 92: Provides for the electronic registration of voter applicants who apply for a driver's license or state ID at motor vehicles offices.

New York

Paperless Registration

Status: PENDING

AB 1712: Automatically registers people to vote via Dept. of Motor Vehicles and Dept. of Taxation and Finance.

Voter Registration Agencies

Status: PENDING

AB 813: Designates state and city universities of New York as voter registration agencies.

Voter Registration Agencies

Status: PENDING

AB 1685: Designates several public agencies as agencies of voter registration and assistance, including libraries, local housing authorities, and high schools.

Online Voter Registration

Status: PENDING

AB 8632/SB 5237: Requires the Board of Elections to accept voter registrations electronically through its Web site.

Election Day Registration

Status: PENDING

AB 1684: Allows qualified voters who have never previously registered to vote to register on any day that the board of elections is open, including Election Day.

Election Day Registration

Status: PENDING

AB 6421/SB 1769: Allows citizens in New York to register to vote at a polling place in their jurisdiction on any day of an election.

Preregistration

Status: PENDING

AB 8631 and AB 1228/SB 542: Provide voter registration forms to students by colleges, universities and public school districts and allows 17-year-old citizens to preregister to vote.

Preregistration

Status: PENDING

AB 7770/SB 5038: Allows 17-year-old citizens to preregister to vote.

Early Voting

Status: PENDING

AB 293 and AB 4120: Establishes early voting in the state of New York.

Early Voting

Status: PENDING

AB 4551: Allows any person to vote early in a general election.

Rhode Island

Anti-Voter ID

Status: PENDING

HB 7219: Removes the requirement to present photographic, government-issued proof of identification to vote.

South Carolina

Civic Education

Status: PENDING

SB 547: Requires the State Dept. of Education and State Election Commission to ensure all 17-year-old high school students have the opportunity to complete a voter registration form.

Appendix II: Election Legislation Opportunities

Tennessee

Anti-Voter ID

Status: PENDING

HB 2139/SB 2176 and SB 2504: Removes the requirement that a voter needs photo identification to vote.

Voter ID Expansion

Status: PENDING

HB 2178 and HB 2241: Recognizes as evidence of identification to vote, a valid employee identification card issued by a Tennessee municipality or county, provided the identification card contains a photograph of the voter.

Voter ID Expansion

Status: PENDING

HB 2242/SB 2379: Allows student identification cards, issued by institutions of higher education in the state, to verify a person's identification to vote.

Virginia

Restoration of Voting Rights

Status: PENDING

HJ 17: Authorizes the General Assembly to provide by general law for the restoration of civil rights for people convicted of felonies who have completed service of their sentence including any period or condition of probation, parole, or suspension of sentence.

Restoration of Voting Rights

Status: PENDING

HB 16, HB 1098: Provides for the automatic restoration of civil rights to people convicted of nonviolent felonies—excluding drug or election-related felonies—upon completion of sentence.

Washington

Paperless Registration

Status: PENDING

HB 2203/SB 6129: Allows driver's license and state identocard applications to serve as applications for voter registration purposes. Voter Registration Agencies

Election Day Registration

Status: PENDING

HB 2204/SB 6127: Allows a person to register to vote on Election Day through the county auditor.

Preregistration

Status: PENDING

HB 2205/SB 6128: Allows 16-year-old citizens to preregister to vote with the office of the secretary of state.

Early Voting

Status: PENDING

HB 1002: Implement all-mail elections in the state of Washington.

Wisconsin

Voter ID Exemption

Status: PENDING

SB 247: Exempts voters who are at least 65 years of age from the state's photo voter ID requirement.

Voter ID Exemption

Status: PENDING

SB 323: Allows a person to obtain a free birth certificate if needed to obtain an ID card for the purpose of voting.

Voter ID Expansion

Status: PENDING

AB 460: Permits the use of student ID for voting purposes.

Restoration of Voting Rights

Status: PENDING

AB 444, SB 329: Restores voting rights to people who have been released from incarceration.

Deceptive Practices

Status: PENDING

AB 393, SB 311: Prohibits any person from engaging in voter intimidation tactics on Election Day.

Deceptive Practices

Status: PENDING

AB 5915/SB 1009: Makes it a civil violation to knowingly communicate false information regarding an election--such as time, place, or manner of an election--in an effort to deter a person from exercising their right to vote.

Appendix III:

Partisan Composition of Legislatures and Governor's Offices

Democratic Legislature and Governor

Arkansas
California
Connecticut
Delaware
Hawaii
Illinois
Maryland
Massachusetts
Vermont
Washington
West Virginia

Republican Legislature and Governor

Alabama
Arizona
Florida
Georgia
Idaho
Indiana
Kansas
Louisiana
Michigan
Maine
North Dakota
Ohio
Oklahoma
Pennsylvania
South Carolina
South Dakota
Tennessee
Texas
Utah
Wisconsin
Wyoming

Divided Legislature, Democratic Governor

Colorado
Kentucky
Minnesota
Missouri
Montana
North Carolina
New Hampshire
New York
Oregon

Divided Legislature, Republican Governor

Alaska
Iowa
Mississippi
Virginia

Democratic Legislature, Republican Governor

Nevada
New Jersey
New Mexico

Unicameral Legislature and Republican Governor

Nebraska

Democratic Legislature, Independent Governor

Rhode Island

Appendix IV: State Election Chiefs

Republican Secretaries of State

Alabama: Beth Chapman
Arizona: Ken Bennett
Arkansas: Mark Martin
Colorado: Scott Gessler
Florida: Kurt Browning
Georgia: Brian Kemp
Idaho: Ben Ysursa
Indiana: Charlie White
Iowa: Matt Schulz
Kansas: Kris Kobach
Louisiana: Tom Schedler
Maine: Charlie E. Summers
Michigan: Ruth Johnson
Mississippi: Delbert Hosemann
Nebraska: John Gale
New Jersey: Kim Guadagno
New Mexico: Dianna Duran
North Dakota: Alvin "Al" Jaeger
Ohio: Jon Husted
Oklahoma: Glenn Coffee
South Carolina: Mark Hammond
South Dakota: Jason Gant
Tennessee: Tre Hargett
Texas: Esperanza "Hope" Andrade
Washington: Sam Reed
Wyoming: Max Maxfield

Democratic Secretaries of State

California: Debra Bowen
Connecticut: Denise Merrill
Kentucky: Alison Lundergan Grimes
Massachusetts: William Galvin
Minnesota: Mark Ritchie
Missouri: Robin Carnahan
Montana: Linda McCulloch
Nevada: Ross Miller
Oregon: Kate Brown
Rhode Island: A. Ralph Mollis
Vermont: Jim Condos
West Virginia: Natalie Tennant
Wisconsin: Douglas La Follete

Miscellaneous

Alaska: Gail Fenumiai, Director, Division of Election
Delaware: Commissioner of Elections, Department
of Elections
Hawaii: Scott Nago, Chief Election Officer, Office of
Elections
Illinois: William McGuffage, chairman, State Board of
Elections
Maryland: Robert L. Walker, chairman, State Board
of Elections
New Hampshire: Michael A. Delaney, Attorney
General
New York: Todd Valentine and Robert Brehm, Co-
Directors, State Board of Elections

North Carolina: Gary Bartlett, Director, State Board
of Elections
Pennsylvania: Carol Aichele, Secretary of the
Commonwealth
Utah: Greg Bell, Lt. Governor
Virginia: Janet Polarek, Secretary of the
Commonwealth

Project Vote is a national nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that promotes voting in historically underrepresented communities. Project Vote takes a leadership role in nationwide voting rights and election administration issues, working through research, litigation, and advocacy to ensure that our constituencies can register, vote, and cast ballots that count.

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February 2012

