



DEBUNKING IN-PERSON VOTER FRAUD

February 2017

Throughout American history, partisan politicians have used the myth of in-person voter fraud, or voter impersonation, to persecute voter registration efforts, and to justify overly restrictive election laws like strict photo-ID and proof-of-citizenship requirements. But voter impersonation is extremely rare in American elections.

- A [December 2006 report](#) by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission interviewed more than two dozen researchers and experts on voter fraud and intimidation. That report concluded that “impersonation of voters is probably the least frequent type of fraud because it is the most likely type of fraud to be discovered, there are stiff penalties associated with this type of fraud, and it is an inefficient method of influencing an election.”
- In one of the most comprehensive investigations of fraud, Justin Levitt of Loyola Law School, Los Angeles [turned up only 31 credible instances of voter impersonation out of more than 1 billion votes cast](#) between 2000 and 2014. Some of those cases may have been because of clerical errors. Levitt’s investigation suggests that while voter impersonation does indeed happen, it happens so rarely that the rate is approximately one instance out of ever 32 million ballots cast.
- Polling place fraud is “inherently incredible,” according to [Richard L. Hasen](#), professor at Loyola Law School and author of the Election Law Blog. “The idea of massive polling-place fraud (through the use of inflated voter rolls) is inherently incredible. Suppose I want to swing the Missouri election for my preferred presidential candidate. I would have to figure out who the fake, dead or missing people on the registration rolls are, then pay a lot of other individuals to go to the polling place and claim to be that person, without any return guarantee – thanks to the secret ballot – that any of them will cast a vote for my preferred candidate. Those who do show up at the polls run the risk of being detected and charged with a felony. And for what – \$10? Polling-place fraud, in short, makes no sense.”
- Laws that purport to address the almost non-existent issue of in-person voter fraud—like strict photo ID laws—are at best a costly solution in search of a problem. At worst, they are deliberate attempts to suppress the vote.
- A [2015 study by Project Vote](#) determined that racial minorities, low-income people, and people under 25 are all far more likely to lack photo identification.
- In April of 2016, Republican congressman Glenn Grothman was asked why he believed the GOP candidate could win Wisconsin for the first time in more than 30 years. “Now we have photo ID,” [Grothman said](#). “And I think photo ID is gonna make a little bit of a difference.” (Trump, as predicted, won Wisconsin, by 27,000 votes. As many as 300,000 registered Wisconsin citizens lacked the necessary ID, according to [court documents](#).)