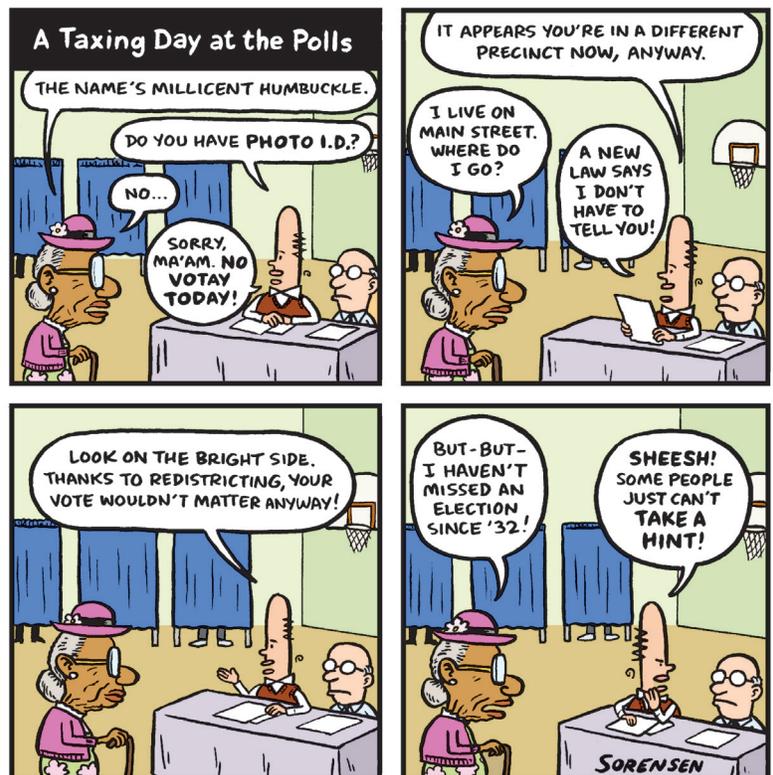


VOTING & ELECTIONS

FACT SHEET

A Woman's Guide to Combating Voter Suppression

August 2012



All men and women should be equal in the voting booth, but new state laws may dramatically impact women's ability to vote in the 2012 election. Since 2011, 16 states have passed restrictive voting laws, 11 states currently have these new laws in effect, and 41 states have introduced at least 180 bills restricting voting.¹ These campaigns to restrict voting rights have gone far beyond preventing the rare case of ineligible voters casting ballots and are now taking away eligible citizens' fundamental right to vote.²

In order to make your voice heard, make sure you know the voting rules in your state.

The new state laws:

- Require voters to produce specific forms of current state-issued photo ID
 - Require voters to produce proof of citizenship
 - Make it more difficult to register to vote by eliminating Election Day registration and placing new restrictions on voter registration drives
 - Limit early and absentee voting
 - Make it more difficult to restore voting rights³
- These laws place barriers in the way of individuals seeking to fulfill their responsibilities as citizens by voting. In particular, they undermine women's right to vote.

- **Because women’s names often change in marriage, many women lack state-issued photo ID in their current legal names.** Although 1 in 10 Americans do not have a valid state-issued photo ID, ten states have recently passed “no-photo, no-vote” laws that will disproportionately impact women because of these name changes.⁴ As a result of these new laws, women who do not have a valid state-issued photo ID in their current name may need to first get an official copy of their marriage license before they can get a photo ID—a cumbersome process that may be prohibitively expensive for women hard hit in this economy.⁵
- **Women often lack proof of citizenship in their current legal names.** Of those voting-age women who have access to documents that prove citizenship, only 66% have documents reflecting their current legal names.⁶ Of those voting-age women who have access to their birth certificates, only 48% have birth certificates with their current legal names.⁷ Voting should be free, fair, and accessible to all, but in order to vote, these women too will have to spend money and time to obtain official copies of their marriage licenses.
- **Women make up nearly 60 percent of all college students, and 18 percent of people who are college-age (between the ages of 18 and 24) lack a photo ID with their current address and current legal name.**⁸ Laws in some states that place restrictions on the ability to use student IDs to vote impose a significant barrier to voting for students.⁹
- **Women make up the greatest share of older Americans, and older voters are far less likely to have state-issued photo IDs.** Six million seniors, 18 percent of the population aged 65 and older, lack state-issued photo ID.¹⁰ Most older Americans are women, and poverty is more common among older women than older men,¹¹ which means financial barriers to voting affect older women particularly.
- **Restrictive voter ID laws put voters struggling in this economy at a profound disadvantage, and women make up the greatest share of these low-income Americans.**¹² Low-income Americans are more than two times more likely than other Americans not to have proof of citizenship or state-issued photo ID.¹³ In the 10 states with restrictive voter ID laws, 1.2 million eligible voters living below the poverty line are located at least 10 miles from the closest state office that issues photo IDs, and many of these eligible voters do not have ready access to transportation.¹⁴

Make sure you know and understand the voting rules in your state.
Call 1-866-OUR-VOTE
 to learn what you need to go vote or to report a voting problem.

Critical issues hang in the balance in this election. Women voters will choose candidates who will make decisions that have profound effects on education, retirement security, health care, reproductive health, and workplace policies for our country.

Women fought hard to win the right to vote. It's time to fight hard to keep it.

When women vote, leaders listen.

REGISTER. VOTE.

The National Women’s Law Center is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that has been working to advance and protect women’s legal rights since 1972. NWLC takes no position on candidates or elections, and nothing herein should be construed as an endorsement of any candidate or party.

- 1 Brennan Center for Justice *2012 Summary of Voting Law Changes*, available at http://www.brennancenter.org/content/resource/2012_summary_of_voting_law_changes/, (last visited Aug. 18, 2012). States with new laws in effect are: Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.
- 2 American Civil Liberties Union *Voter Suppression in America*, available at <http://www.aclu.org/voter-suppression-america> (last visited Aug. 17, 2012).
- 3 See *Summary of Voting Law Changes*, *supra* note 1 at 2.
- 4 Brennan Center for Justice, *The Challenge of Obtaining Voter Identification*, available at http://brennan.3cdn.net/f5f28dd844a143d303_i36m6lyhy.pdf (last visited Aug. 16, 2012).
- 5 *Id.*
- 6 Brennan Center for Justice, *Citizens Without Proof: A Survey of Americans' Possession of Documentary Proof of Citizenship and Photo Identification*, p. 2 (November 2006), available at http://www.brennancenter.org/page/-/d/download_file_39242.pdf (last visited August 16, 2012).
- 7 *Id.*
- 8 Alex Williams, *The New Math on Campus*, NY TIMES (Feb. 5, 2005); *Citizens Without Proof*, *supra* note 6 at 3.
- 9 Open Channel, NBCNews.com, *That Student I.D. May Not Get You Into the Voting Booth*, available at <http://openchannel.nbcnews.com/who-can-vote%22> (last visited August 17, 2012).
- 10 *Citizens Without Proof*, *supra* note 6 at 3; see also NAACP, *Seniors: How Voting Laws Could Discount Seniors at the Polls*, available at <http://www.thisismyvote.org/pages/seniors-how-voting-laws-could-discount-seniors-at-the-polls> (last visited Jul, 13, 2012).
- 11 Administration on Aging, *A Profile of Older Americans: 2011*, at 1 (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2012), available at http://www.aoa.gov/aoaroot/aging_statistics.
- 12 NWLC, *Poverty Among Women & Families 2000-2010* (2011), available at <http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/povertyamongwomenandfamilies2010final.pdf>
- 13 *Citizens Without Proof*, *supra* note 6 at 3.
- 14 *The Challenge of Obtaining Voter Identification*, *supra* note 4 at 3.