

Via Electronic Mail

February 23, 2026

Dear Senators:

The leaders of the nation’s legacy civil rights organizations write to convey our vehement opposition to the “SAVE America Act” (H.R. 7296 / S. 1383), the “Make Elections Great Again Act” (H.R. 7300), and the earlier introduced “SAVE Act” (H.R.22). Our organizations have fought for decades, some for over a century, to make our electoral process open and secure for all and to ensure that all Americans have equal access to the ballot.

These bills impose onerous and discriminatory barriers to the ballot at a time when our freedom to vote is under attack and longstanding federal voting rights protections have been severely undercut. Enacting this legislation would accelerate the current Administration’s efforts to convert the federal government from a bulwark against discrimination into a direct threat to Black voters and other voters of color—reversing its historic role.

Importantly, none of the extreme burdens these laws would place on eligible voters are justified by any legitimate threat to the security and safety of the U.S. electoral process. Rather, they are motivated by a desire to make voting more onerous for and less accessible to American citizens generally and to infringe on the voting rights of certain populations of voters in particular, and, especially, Black voters.

Indeed, Black voters today face the greatest threat of discrimination and disenfranchisement since the Jim Crow era. Since the Supreme Court’s decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013), more than thirty states have enacted over one hundred restrictive voting laws, disproportionately affecting voters of color.¹ Since this decision, racial disparities in voter participation have increased, particularly in areas formerly protected by the Voting Rights Act’s preclearance provision.²

These bills would create substantial and disproportionate barriers to participation for Black voters and others of color, married individuals who have changed their names, rural voters, low-income communities, and others who may face logistical, financial, or documentation obstacles when obtaining the limited forms of identification the legislation requires to exercise the fundamental right to vote, such as a passport or birth certificate.

¹ Brennan Ctr. for Just., *Voting Laws Roundup: September 2024* (Sept. 26, 2024), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/voting-laws-roundup-september-2024> (noting that “[i]n the 11 years since the *Shelby County v. Holder* decision removed a key check against voting restrictions, at least 31 states have enacted 114 restrictive voting laws”)

² Juliana Kim, *Racial disparities in voter turnout have grown since Supreme Court ruling, study says*, NPR (Mar. 5, 2024), <https://www.npr.org/2024/03/05/1235521824/voter-turnout-race-disparities-supreme-court> (reporting that the turnout gap between white and nonwhite voters grew faster in jurisdictions formerly covered by Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act following *Shelby County v. Holder*).

Only half of the total population and only a third of Black people hold valid U.S. passports, while nearly half of all Black Americans under 30 do not have a license with their current name and address.³ Nearly 70 million Americans have taken a spouse's last name, and these bills risk disenfranchising married women and others whose citizenship documents reflect a prior legal name.⁴ Requiring eligible voters to obtain documents demanded under the bills will come as an unnecessary expense and amount to a modern-day poll tax, which was outlawed decades ago after our ancestors' hard-fought fight for voting rights.

The proposals would functionally dismantle online and mail-in voter registration by requiring applicants to present documentary proof of citizenship, including a passport, certified birth certificate, or naturalization certificate, frequently in person and within strict deadlines. Only 6% of voters currently register in person at an election office and over 146 million Americans do not currently own a passport.⁵

The legislation would also severely disrupt in-person voter registration drives, which have been essential for mobilizing political participation in Black communities and other historically marginalized communities.

In addition to these identification requirements, legislative proposals would require aggressive voter purges that are sure to remove properly registered voters from the rolls; severely restrict vote-by-mail options that voters have increasingly embraced since the pandemic; and target election officials with egregious levels of civil and criminal liability.

³ Chinni, Dante, *Who Owns a Passport in America?*, American Communities Project (Mar. 19, 2023), <https://www.americancommunities.org/who-owns-a-passport-in-america/> (reporting that only about half of the total U.S. population and roughly one-third of Black Americans hold valid U.S. passports); Ballard, Jamie, *Adults Under 30 More Likely to Have a U.S. Passport*, YouGov (Aug. 31, 2023), <https://today.yougov.com/travel/articles/46028-adults-under-30-more-likely-have-us-passport> (reporting passport ownership disparities by age); Hasbrouck, Edward, *Who Lacks ID in America Today?*, Papers, Please (June 7, 2024), <https://papersplease.org/wp/2024/06/07/who-lacks-id-in-america-today/> (reporting that nearly half of Black Americans under 30 lack a license reflecting their current name and address).

⁴ Gréta Bedekovics & Sydney Bryant, *The SAVE Act Would Disenfranchise Millions of Citizens*, Ctr. for Am. Progress (Jan. 31, 2025), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-save-act-would-disenfranchise-millions-of-citizens/> (reporting that as many as 69 million women who have taken their spouse's name do not have a birth certificate matching their current legal name).

⁵ U.S. Election Assistance Commission, *2024 Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS) Comprehensive Report (2025)*, https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/2025-07/2024_EAVS_Report_508.pdf (reporting that 6% of voters registered in person at an election office); U.S. Dep't of State, *U.S. Passport Statistics*, <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/about-us/reports-and-statistics.html> (reporting that over 146 million Americans do not currently hold a valid passport)

This legislation erects discriminatory barriers to the ballot while pretending to “solve” a problem that does not exist.⁶ Its true purpose and foreseeable effect, rooted in fear of the multiracial democracy the United States can and must become, is to limit access to the ballot and stifle the political power of our increasingly diverse electorate. It is a misnomer to describe these proposals as “saving” American elections when their practical impact would be to restrict access to them.

We demand lawmakers oppose these dangerous and discriminatory measures that, if passed, will drag our country back to a time mirroring its infamous Jim Crow era. Instead, we ask you to focus efforts on advancing proposals that protect the fundamental right of every eligible citizen to participate fully and equally in free and fair elections.

Signed,

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⁶ Brennan Ctr. for Justice, *The Myth of Voter Fraud*, <https://www.brennancenter.org/topics/voting-elections/vote-suppression/myth-voter-fraud> (explaining that extensive research shows voter fraud is vanishingly rare and that false allegations have been used to justify restrictive voting policies).

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