



## FACT SHEET ON THE IMPACT OF VOTE SUPPRESSION ON WOMEN

### **The Basics: Early Voting and Voter ID Requirements**

#### *What is early voting?*

Thirty-two states and the District of Columbia offer some form of *early voting*, which allows voters to visit an election official's office or, in some states, other satellite voting locations, and cast a vote in person without offering an excuse for why the voter is unable to vote on election day. Satellite voting locations vary by state, and may include other county and state offices (besides the election official's office), grocery stores, shopping malls, schools, libraries, and other locations. The time period for early voting varies from state to state:

- The date on which early voting begins may be as early as 45 days before the election, or as late as the Friday before the election. The average starting time for early voting across all 32 states is 22 days before the election.
- Early voting typically ends just a few days before Election Day.
- Early voting periods range in length from four days to 45 days; the average across all 32 states is 19 days.
- At least 12 of the 32 early voting states require that early voting centers be open on at least one Saturday or Sunday during the early voting period. Others give county or local officials the authority to determine the hours for early voting.

Because Election Day is not a holiday, voters will have to take time away from their jobs and other commitments to vote. The availability of early voting allows them more flexibility in doing just that, and helps to reduce long wait times at the polls on Election Day because many voters will have already cast ballots during early voting.

#### *What is a voter identification requirement?*

A voter identification requirement mandates that voters, unless some exception applies, present a *valid* document to prove their identity at a polling place at the time they wish to cast a ballot. The exceptions to the requirement vary by state, as do the documents considered to be valid. A *photo ID* requirement specifies that the documents to be presented feature a photograph of the prospective voter. The kinds of photo IDs considered to be valid for purposes of proving a voter's identity also vary. For example, a university issued student photo ID is not considered valid in North Carolina.

Both state and federal laws lay out ID requirements for voters at various stages of the voting process, such as requirements for in-person registration, mail-in registration, first-time registration, in-person ballots, absentee ballots, and provisional ballots. Federal law creates certain *minimum* standards for voter registration and ballots for federal elections, but apart from some exceptions, states are generally free to impose requirements beyond those set by federal statute. Some states have enacted laws that impose very stringent identification requirements on prospective voters.

States that already have strict photo ID requirements include GA, TN, IN, and KS. A handful of others states, including Texas and North Carolina, will begin enforcement of strict photo ID laws soon.



*In the following ways, women's suffrage rights are adversely affected by vote suppressive laws:* Efforts to restrict early voting, such as shortening the window of availability, hurt single mothers by placing needless demands on their already limited time. There are about 10.3 million families in the United States where a woman is the only parent, as opposed to two million families with a male single parent.<sup>i</sup> Given the time pressures faced by single parents, generous early voting periods have the effect of expanding access to voting, and conversely brief periods (or none at all) do the opposite.

Women who change their names after marriage are disproportionately impacted by voting requirements that demand forms of identification (particularly proofs of citizenship) reflecting their current name. According to a survey by the Brennan Center for Justice, less than half (48%) of voting-age women with ready access to their U.S. birth certificates have a birth certificate with their current legal name, and about one-third (34%) of all women who have ready access to *any* proof of citizenship still do not have a document with their current legal name.<sup>ii</sup>

Of the total number of persons for whom the North Carolina State Board of Elections could not find an exact match between the information provided in voter registration forms and information in the DMV records, 67% were female.<sup>iii</sup> This indicates that North Carolina women would be disproportionately impacted by a requirement that voter provided information be exactly in accordance with information already recorded by the State.

Stringent voter ID requirements, particularly ones that reject student IDs as unacceptable, burden the ability of students to vote. As undergraduate and graduate students in the United States are disproportionately female<sup>iv</sup>, it follows that more women will be so burdened.

The number and location of polling places has a pronounced effect on ballot access to persons with limited transportation options. For persons primarily dependent on public transport, distant polling places present a barrier to ballot access, and according to a report by the APTA (American Public Transportation Association), 55% of all public transit trips are taken by women.<sup>v</sup>

The elderly are particularly vulnerable to the suppressive effects of voter ID requirements and restrictive early voting, both because millions of seniors otherwise eligible to vote do not have photo IDs and because so many seniors have fewer transportation options.<sup>vi</sup> And elderly women are disproportionately impacted because there are simply more of them. The over-65 population in the U.S. is 57% female.<sup>vii</sup>



## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> US Census Bureau report, *America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2012*, table A1, all races, available at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/cps2012.html>

<sup>ii</sup> Brennan Center report *Citizens Without Proof: A Survey of Americans' Possession of Documentary Proof of Citizenship and Photo Identification*, page 2, November 2006, available at [http://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/d/download\\_file\\_39242.pdf](http://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/d/download_file_39242.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> North Carolina State Board of Elections report *2013 SBOE-DMV ID Analysis*, page 1, January 2013, available at [http://www.wral.com/asset/news/state/nccapitol/2013/01/08/11956025/2013\\_Analysis.pdf](http://www.wral.com/asset/news/state/nccapitol/2013/01/08/11956025/2013_Analysis.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> US Census Bureau report, *2012 Statistical Abstract on Education*, page 4, available at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/12statab/educ.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> American Public Transportation Association report *A Profile of Public Transportation Passenger Demographics and Travel Characteristics Reported in On-Board Surveys*, page 7, May 2007, available at [http://www.apta.com/resources/statistics/Documents/transit\\_passenger\\_characteristics\\_text\\_5\\_29\\_2007.pdf](http://www.apta.com/resources/statistics/Documents/transit_passenger_characteristics_text_5_29_2007.pdf)

<sup>vi</sup> Brennan Center report *Citizens Without Proof: A Survey of Americans' Possession of Documentary Proof of Citizenship and Photo Identification*, page 3, November 2006, available at [http://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/d/download\\_file\\_39242.pdf](http://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/d/download_file_39242.pdf)

<sup>vii</sup> U.S. Census Bureau report, *The Older Population: 2010*, page 2, available at <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-09.pdf>