

VOTER ID LAWS AND THE CORRELATION TO VOTER TURNOUT

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I address state voter identification laws and test to see if they cause lower voter turnout. My hypothesis states a significance that voter ID laws have in determining voter turnout in each state's election. The focus is on each of the fifty states elections and examines them from 2000 through 2016. With voter ID laws being the independent variable and turnout a control variable, the study was able to determine a statistical significance between the two. There is no readily available data table for voter ID laws, the table created will advance any further research done within voter ID laws.

Aaron Dusso, PhD, Chair

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Introduction

Voter identification laws are a hotly debated topic and according to the New York Times (Fernandez 2018), elections are under scrutiny. These types of laws are fundamentally debated between two groups of citizens. Those who wish to root out fraud in American elections and those who seek to protect the voting rights of all United States citizens. For example, those who either do not or forget to bring proper identification are turned away at polling places in Indiana and are unable to cast their vote. These requirements have become partisan politics in the United States over a set period and through multiple types of elections. This issue has been highlighted on numerous outlets in the media and has become a regular discussion among individuals, such as in the Washington Post (Gelman 2018) and Newsweek (Zhao 2019). The research done for this topic will provide some empirical evidence on whether photo voter identification (voter ID) laws have an actual effect on voter turnout.

The study done for this topic will answer questions on whether voter ID laws have an actual effect on voter turnout. My hypothesis states voter ID laws will have a suppressing effect on voter turnout and income will prevent voters from participating in elections. Those who wish to vote will already have a government-issued form of voter identification with a photograph of themselves. Those who have a strong urge to vote will seek out ways in which they can obtain an acceptable form of identification if they do not already possess one. Those who do not wish to vote will neither go out and vote nor see the necessity of having this form of identification.

I will use all fifty states and Washington D.C. as part of the sample size. The three types of elections looked at are gubernatorial, senatorial, and general. This study will

span from the years 2000 until 2016 every two years. Some requirements can become detrimental to voters if the unintended consequences are not carefully examined. While the need for secure elections may be a reality for some, a need for an open election may be for others. Photo IDs are more of a protection against voter impersonation and could be only part of the problem. Voter ID laws in states with the strictest laws still do not account for types of fraud such as ballot stuffing, machine tampering, and vote-buying.

What Do We Know About Voter Laws?

As a collective, Americans have a fundamental understanding of voter ID laws. Rather than looking at raw data, we tend to go along party lines since this issue has become increasingly partisan. The recent addition of new voter ID laws, coupled with the lack of information, is partly to blame for this sort of blind ignorance on voting issues. As more information becomes available to US voters, we, as a collective, can get a better understanding of how this affects the average voter.

In recent history, we have seen multiple ways in which American citizens are hindered at the voting booths. The most well-known example of a voting barrier is a poll tax. A poll tax is levied among all voters, without regard to economic or social standing. This tax proved as practical in order to discourage poor voters from voting in their elections. The poll tax was found to be unconstitutional and severely limited a right to vote, which is given to every adult American. The most notable of the poll taxes was after the Civil War, during the Reconstruction. These taxes were certainly targeted to African Americans following their freedom from slavery, in order to block their vote.

Gerrymandering has also been a traditional way in which elections are rigged in the United States. Kang (2017) states there needs to be a way to combat the increase of partisanship. The current system sees too much partisanship and gridlock, which has become an increasing normative on ineffectiveness. Gerrymandering is a voting barrier, as it locks a portion of the population into voting for a specific party or candidate with the overwhelming majority. Voter ID laws are one of those grey areas which could increase partisanship. Kang (2017) thinks if the increase in partisanship becomes justifiable, then the more difficult it will be for the two major parties to be able to cooperate and become active. Not only does gerrymandering affect partisanship, but the laws being open to

interpretation also affect voter identification. Although the United States has had problems with voter corruption in its past, this does not necessarily mean voter fraud is a rampant problem.

Why the Need to Combat Voter Fraud?

Voter fraud can present incredible problems for Americans but should not be a surprise. Throughout history, there have been ways in which party politics have used laws in order to restrict the ability of citizens to vote. Corruption has played a role in elections at times in our nation's history, but the latest significant cases occurred decades ago. Fraudulent cases have not been as frequent as many politicians claim today. The problem that voter ID laws seek to prevent, voter impersonations, has not been reported in a US election since 2000.

Poll workers ultimately have the task of implementing and enforcing the state's voter ID laws. Entrusting an election's administration and election eligibility to local partisan control will only ask for trouble to Issacharoff (2014). Those who are already in power will have a strong urge to suppress the vote of a group of individuals who may not vote for their party. This type of suppression has come in the form of voter ID laws, which have proven to suppress a minority vote. Poll workers treat minorities differently in states that have minimal identification requirements (Atkeson, Kerevel, Alvarez, and Hall 2014). Classified as street-level bureaucrats, poll workers who believe a photo identification should be required, are ultimately the ones who request identification in order to vote and have an individual level autonomy apart from elected officials. (Atkeson, Kerevel, Alvarez, and Hall 2014).

Street-level bureaucrats have a level of autonomy from elected officials. The workers themselves are often paid less than minimum wage, or are volunteers, and work long hours on Election Day. Depending on these workers to enforce the ID laws of the state puts more workload on these workers than needed. A solution to poll worker bias

could be more education and improved training techniques (Cobb, Greiner, and Quinn 2010). Discrimination instituted at a bureaucratic level in an election could cause a suppression of minority voters (White, Nathan, and Faller 2015). An undertone of racism becomes apparent when nonwhite voters asked and, in most cases, turned away when unable to provide the proper identification (Cobb, Greiner, and Quinn 2012).

Ultimately, voter ID law enforcement comes down to the individual volunteer of the polling venues. One such question immediately put forth is what drives a poll worker to ask a minority voter and not a white voter? A subconscious sense of racism could ultimately be a driving force behind the unintended consequences of voter ID laws. How could one individual ask a registered voter to produce an ID over another voter? Would it not be enough to see the individual is a registered voter? The study believes these sorts of questions need asking in order to determine the actual level of the effect voter ID laws have. Whether driven by race, or against an economical line of division, one thing remains consistent; there is some level of division identified among the American voter.

The landmark case of *Crawford v. Marion County* in Indiana sparked the debate over recent voter ID laws and their effect on voter turnout. Indiana passed in 2006 a strict photo-ID policy for those wanting to participate in elections. This case found its way into the Supreme Court and the laws were ruled constitutional, but there is still a lot of a grey area on how strict they can be enforced. The constitutionality of the laws is hotly debated, even more so after the 2016 presidential election where Trump claimed millions voted fraudulently. Voter fraud is statistically rare within the United States (Groarke 2016). Since there is a lack of fraud to pull from as evidence, the best way to explain why these laws are enacted is for the benefit of party politics. The future of these laws looks cynical

since partisanship has become synonymous with voter laws. The Supreme Court found the laws constitutional and upheld the statute. Since then, new decisions have been made on the severity of the law to be enacted and which elections are eligible.

President Donald Trump stated during the 2016 presidential election that United States election results were compromised by rampant voter fraud. Cottrell, Herron, and Westwood (2018) used aggregate election statistics in order to focus on Trump's claim of non-voter participation. Looking at voter fraud cases in the 2016 election, they found there is strong evidence the claims made by President Donald Trump are not grounded in fact. Cottrell, Herron, and Westwood (2018) argue the claims of noncitizens voting in a federal election, to risk deportation or jail time, seem unlikely, if probable.

The reason behind the implementation and enforcement for voter ID laws has been to protect against voter impersonation in elections. Per Richman, Chatthe and Earnest, "The United States has a long history of noncitizen voting at the local, state, and national levels." (2014). Noncitizens voting does impact election results, but the number is minimal and likely determined on the effect campaigns have on mobility. Voter ID laws are unlikely to be effective in preventing the participation of noncitizens in elections (Richman, Chatthe, and Earnest 2014). In addition to the lack of voter impersonation, states with strict voter ID laws show no difference from other states in the impact of voter impersonation (Ahlquist, Mayer, and Jackman 2014). Based on these findings, voter security should direct towards other forms of voter fraud.

Fraud is not an immediate problem in the US, but it holds more precedence in highly volatile elections (Jost 2014). The nature of a democracy insists that voting rights be granted to every citizen. If these rights are not immediately granted, they will

undoubtedly be extended to them eventually over time. This expansion can be taken advantage of by fraud and rigged elections because of those who have not voted before. Voter fraud is nothing new to the American system and both sides are at fault for raising the debate. If anything, voter fraud is subtle within the United States and does not have significance over results (Gilbert 2016).

Voter ID laws show the fairness of the US election system (Kobach 2012). Showing a form of identification, produces a sense of legitimacy and validation to the authenticity of the election results. A photo ID will only help in enhancing the voting process for the state and the US in general (Kobach 2012). An increase in the transparency of the government can only serve for the good of the cause and can alleviate questions of doubt from the voters' minds in the election results. Having a photo ID has become a way of life in the United States, as one would need to provide a photo ID in order to do daily tasks. These tasks included are purchasing tobacco and alcohol, renting a car, and cashing a check. Since one would need a photo ID to do any number of these tasks and many more, it has become almost a necessity to have one regularly in the US. No matter who wins the election, a fairer election will help in declaring the authenticity of the party who wins (Kobach 2012). No party or official wants to win an election under scrutiny, because it may not only destroy their credibility in office but for future political aspirations as well.

Use of Convenience Voting

Convenience voting makes up less than thirty percent of votes cast by Americans. (Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, Miller, and Toffey 2008) This term can refer to any voting outside of going to the citizens polling place on Election Day to vote. The action behind offering convenience voting is to lower the cost of going to vote in order to increase voter turnout. Convenience voting has primarily been examined to determine how the individual utilizes the system and what effect it has on the vote. (Galanes-Rosenbaum, Miller, and Toffey 2008) Since the implementation of convenience voting methods, voter turnout has increased but only slightly (Galanes-Rosenbaum, Miller, and Toffey 2008).

If early voting does not affect voter turnout, eliminating early voting could be cost-effective for the state. Giammo and Brox (2010) surmises several things could happen for a citizen to early vote. They could either stumble upon an early voting location, run across others who voted early, encounter news coverage of early voting or view political campaigns encouraging people to vote early (Giammo and Brox 2010). The question should not be whether how many votes early but how early voting affects voter turnout to elections.

A common belief in making voting more convenient will increase voter turnout. Burden, Canon, Mayer, and Moynihan (2014) wanted to challenge this belief by testing the direct and indirect effects of election laws and analyzing prior research on state election laws and turnout. Additionally, they evaluated how Election Day registration, same-day registration, and early voting shapes voting costs, both directly and indirectly (Burden, Canon, Mayer, and Moynihan 2014). Burden et al. found that Election Day registration increases voter turnout and early voting decreases, when implemented on

their own (2014). However, combining the two will offset the adverse effects of early voting (2014). Burden, Canon, Mayer, and Moynihan state "one of the most popular election reforms among state governments may inadvertently result in fewer votes at the polls." (2014).

Current Research Done on Voter ID Laws

Current research done on this topic is either incomplete or focused on a single state or type of election. According to Highton, “a small number of studies have employed suitable research designs and generally find modest if any, turnout effects of voter identification laws.” (2017). A study by Hajnal, Lavevardi, and Nielson (2018) only looked at the five most recent election cycles. Grimmer, Hersh, Meredith, Mummolo, and Nall (2018) pointed out problems with an incomplete study will not get a complete picture on the effect of these laws.

Studies have currently shown either a single state (Atkeson, Kerevel, Alvarez, and Hall 2014) focus or a single presidential election cycle (Cotrell, Herron, and Westwood 2018). A large part of why general elections are studied is the availability of data and an increase in voter turnout from each state (Burden, Canon, Mayer, and Moynihan 2014). Over time, the data available through voter turnout, demographics, and education becomes increasingly difficult to find. Senatorial and gubernatorial elections, while important, do not receive attention from the general voters (Richman, Chatthe, and Earnest 2014). Voter turnout subsequently is seen to be lower, possibly due to lack of media coverage or other variables (Holbrook and Weinschenk 2014).

The lack of readily available empirical evidence, as stated by Alvarez (2008), leads to claims from either side’s narrative rather than looking at the determining of what can be proven. The data gathered here in this study is from voter availability, voter turnout, strength of voter ID law, and population of each state. With no readily available source in which all the data is compiled, having one source will help availability. More research in this area begins with the Census Bureau, the recorded data

still needs to be even then the information was only the most recent data and for a general election. This data also had a lack of break down from each state. For the complete data, “The Almanac of American Politics” is the most comprehensive volume but is only available in a printed edition.

Polarization on Voter ID Laws

Scholars have shown to voice a popular opinion among many voters on their perceptions of voter ID laws. The two most prominent schools of thought on the impact of voter ID laws are the marginalization of a group of voters who cannot possess a valid form of identification, and the need to protect American elections from voter fraud. The two perspectives have been equally politicized in order to gain support among the partisanship. The Democratic Party has become outspoken against the opportunity cost of obtaining a form of identification has against individuals of a lower socioeconomic class. Conversely, the Republican Party has predominantly taken a stand in need for American elections to be protected from voter fraud.

Congress has become quite polarized over the last decade, and in turn, polarized the general population. Hill and Tausanovitch (2015) test on whether the population and Senators have become increasingly polarized from 1957 to 2012. Hill and Tausonovitch (2015) states "the Senate has always had a far different structure of ideology than the public." They would suggest polarization may be in part due to our institutions rather than a reflection of the American people. Primary voters, however, are fewer centrists than voters in general elections. Hill (2015) suggests primary electorates remain a candidate for polarizing influence on Congress. Polarization becomes a factor in discussing voter ID laws and in the manner, these laws have increased polarization amid President Trump's election.

These types of laws, while not new, have been more likely to be adopted when the governor and congressmen and women are members of the Republican Party (Biggers and Hanmer 2017). Throughout history, the United States has used a lot of different types

of laws in order to suppress voters for usually racial bias. The more rapidly the minority population expands, then the likelihood of voter ID laws being passed increases (Biggers and Hamner 2017).

Republican lawmakers strongly influence the adoption of voter ID laws in electorally competitive states (Hicks, McGee, Sellers, Smith 2014). This sort of effect is also significantly weaker in an uncompetitive state. The authors of the study believe in competitive elections, restrictive voter ID laws means maintaining Republican support. Republicans wish to suppress the vote of those they believe would vote Democrat because they do not possess a valid form of identification. This sort of suppression would altogether decrease Democratic electoral gains. Hicks, McKee, Sellers, and Smith (2014) conclude Republicans would instead try to suppress the vote of minorities, rather than expand their party to try to include these subgroups. Those party politics has evolved the issue of voter ID laws well beyond the point of trying to combat voter fraud, to the Republicans desperately trying to retain power.

Negative Impact of Voter ID Laws on Minority Voters

In the latest study, Hajnal, Kuk, and Nielson (2018) found evidence that voter ID laws have a significant impact on minority voter suppression. Latino voters are negatively affected in general elections and all minorities in many elections (Hajnal, Kuk, and Lajevardi 2018). Voter turnout among all minority groups is lower across the board (Hajnal, Lajevardi, and Nielson 2017). Evidence showed states with strict voter laws had their elections skewed right politically. The low turnout in these states could have the disastrous effects of voter marginalization and inaccurate representation in government. The strict voter laws need to be scaled back, but no evidence suggests mild voter laws can have the same negative impact, according to Hajnal, Lajevardi, and Nielson (2017).

Evidence suggests minority voters can indeed win elections when their turnout is high (Frey 2013). The 2008 and 2012 elections had the highest rate of turnouts for minorities in history. White voter turnout did see a slight decrease but was majorly Republican (Frey 2013). The minority vote had a significant increase from the 2004 election and primarily voted Democrat. This turnout showed a victory for President Barack Obama in both 2008 and 2012. The minority vote is so significant, it is believed they are the primary variable in why President Obama won the 2008 and 2012 elections Frey (2013). Suppression of this voting population is very significant effects on election results.

Black, Latino, and Asian voters are impacted due to the passing and enforcement of voter ID laws (Barreto, Nuno, and Sanchez 2018). Proposition 200 in Arizona in 2004 implemented a strict non-photo ID voter policy. Evidence shows that since passing the

proposition, there has been a significant drop in the voter turnout within these demographics across all election types.

Data used from the Current Population Survey on an individual level have shown the strictest forms of voter identification laws harm the participation of registered voters relative to weak voter ID requirements (Alvarez, Michael, Bailer, and Katz 2008). The study has also found strict voting requirements depress the turnout rate for those less educated and lower-income populations for both minorities and non-minorities (2008).

Voter ID laws in Georgia were passed in the 2008 election but not in the 2004 election. According to Hood and Bullock (2012), "turnout rate for those registrants lacking ID drops to 39.6%, whereas for those with photo ID the rate falls to 70.0%." The negative impact Georgia's voter ID law shows significant suppression to those who do not have a form of identification. With a drop in voter turnout across the board, Hood and Bullock (2012) do not find it disproportionately affects minority voters.

In 2008, Georgia a photo ID was required in order to cast a vote. Evidence has shown a suppression effect that statutes had among those who lacked the proper ID (Hood and Bullock 2008). Data tested also found turnout was indeed fourth tenths of a percentage point in 2008. In addition to their findings, it could not be concluded that the suppression was not racial or ethnically motivated like some would suggest (Hood and Bullock 2008).

Voter ID laws have a racial component to strict voter identification laws (Bentele and O'Brien (2013). Deeply rooted racial ties with other voting barriers and partisanship make for malicious intent (2013). Looking at data on voter restriction changes made in states from 2006-2011, "this legislation as yet an additional layer of exclusionary policy

practices works to reduce political participation and electoral access by socially marginalized" (Bentele and O'Brien 2013). The use of these types of laws is inherently to restrict electoral access and have seen this in states with more minority voters (Bentele and O'Brien 2013).

People are more likely to vote if the benefits outweigh the costs of the vote (Hershey 2009). These costs, however, could be different depending on the subgroup. Registration hours also have a significant impact on voter turnout. The fewer the number of hours the registration polls are open, the more significant the suppression effect is. Evidence shows those who already have a photo ID issued to them potentially have no cost or little to go vote (Hershey 2009).

Discrimination should not be able to be determined by laws passed, either by social or economic bias. Not just racial discrimination but "economic inequality has been rising," there seems a divide among classes of having and have not (Peterman 2017). Those who do not have the proper form of identification have an increased cost of not just voting but having to obtain the proper form of identification. These costs would include time, money, transportation, and information needed in order to receive the identification needed. The added burden of these costs is more likely to fall upon the less educated and lower-income individuals. Also, there is an increase in the likelihood to have an impact on the disabled.

Voter identification laws have had a significant impact on the state of Indiana which has a rather registration policy and voter ID requirements. The unintended consequence in Indiana in the passing of voter ID laws is lower-income citizens are less likely to vote and turn out during elections (Baretto, Nuno, and Sanchez 2007). Evidence

shows this has had an even more significant impact on the African American and Hispanic American communities (2007). This is disproportionate from the rest of the state and does not indeed hold the ideals of American society. The negative impact these laws have had on minorities could prove to have more of an impact on their communities as well with their lack of representation in government (Barreto, Nuno, Sanchez, and Walker 2009).

Positive or No Impact of Voter ID Laws

In response to the study conducted by Hajnal, Lehavardi, and Nielson (2017), Grimmer, Hersh, Meredith, Mummolo, and Nall (2018) found some inaccuracies in the data used to produce the results. Data pulled from the Cooperative Congressional Election Survey disputes these claims as being incomplete and in finding accurate data. The survey used nonresponse bias and unable to determine socioeconomic status can create variables contrary to the study. The evidence shows that voter ID laws can increase minority voter turnout (Grimmer, Hersh, Mummolo, and Nall 2018).

Voter ID laws does not have a significant impact on voter turnout (Mycoff, Wagner, and Wilson 2009). Stricter voter-ID laws need to be studied at both the aggregate and individual level. Political interest and education were the main interests for individuals wanting to vote. Voter-ID requirements are a small piece of the voting behavior puzzle than often sought after (Mycoff, Wagner, and Wilson (2009). More critical factors in voter turnout could be issues, competitiveness in elections, and an overall interest in politics are more likely to contribute to the decision on whether some individual votes or not.

Lack of Data on Voter ID Laws

There is no reasonable study on the short-term participation that can give credible information on the effect; meanwhile, the long-term effect has yet to be determined (Burden 2018). Lower voter turnout rate could be from a multitude of a variables that these studies may not even have realized yet (Highton 2017). Additional data in time may lead to a possible explanation of whether voter laws indeed are to blame for the low turnout. Recently partisan politics have given rise to a need for empirical evidence, so the scholarly community is putting forth more data each year (Highton 2017).

Information could have an impact with voter turnout, though Weaver (2015) does not have a definitive answer. A survey needs to be conducted to administer to subgroups of the eligible voting population in order to find anything substantial (Weaver 2015). A lack of information and the recency of this issue to be the major problems of his lack of findings. He also believes the pace of movement voter ID laws are having across the states could potentially be problematic with the lack of information and tests conducted.

Data collected among counties along the Tennessee-Virginia border and the 2012 general election, raised voter turnout by a percentage point (Citrin, Greene, and Levy 2016). More information and testing would be needed for more confidence in this conclusion. More elections using counties within a statewide level would be the most beneficial (Citrin, Greene, and Levy 2016). Developing accurate data at a county level can result in more confident findings. Variables become important in testing voter ID laws in relation to voter turnout, "ordinal treatment variables should be adopted instead of some of the more rigid and assumption-driven practices seen in the applied literature today." (Alvarez, Bailey, and Katz 2011)

Not enough elections have passed, and not enough states have passed stricter ID laws to give enough data for a conclusion (Erik and Minnite (2013)). Both partisan sides of the debate make claims citing data that is insufficient. The differences among state turnouts are just too vast and varied for them to be used with precision to support either claim made in voter ID laws.

Collecting data needed to test voter turnout is crucial to test voter ID laws accurately. Voting turnout is generally collected through survey response on whether the respondent has voted. Misreporting can cause many problems for scholars who have used CCES in their data (Ansolabehere and Hersh 2012). Misreporting may not all be intentional because the CCES is a voluntary survey in which those who have voted are more likely to participate (Ansolabehere and Hersh 2012). In order to catch this misreporting, Ansolabehere and Hersh partnered with Catalist, LLC. They explain "Catalist is a political data vendor sells detailed registration and microtargeting data to the Democratic Party, unions, and left-of-center interest groups." (Ansolabehere and Hersh 2012) Catalist becomes useful by using the pre-processed data obtained by the government voting registration and cross-checks it within its database.

Public Perception

Perception of voter ID laws is crucial in determining if they are fundamentally a voting barrier. A fact of voter ID laws is prohibiting specific individuals from participation in an election as individuals who fail to present the necessary form of identification needed under these laws cannot participate in their right and civic duty as an American citizen. Voter ID laws can be perceived as equivalent to a poll tax. Poll taxes were instituted in order to prohibit those of lesser economic standing to participate. Voter ID laws looked at as a sort of poll tax given the cost of obtaining a valid form of identification under the law is different for everyone. Without being able to understand the cost of obtaining a valid form of identification or with having the cost be significantly less, it may be easy to make assumptions these sorts of laws are common sense. Perception is critical for voters to be able to understand the unintended consequences of these laws that attempt to prohibit voter fraud.

Voter ID laws are just one example of other types of voting barriers used in the past to discourage or downright refuse certain groups from participating in elections. Having to pay a tax to cast a vote presents overt bigotry against those who are unable to afford the said tax — determined through different scholars the currency needed in a poll tax translated to a different kind of cost in making it lawful for a registered United States voter to present a form of identification.

Indiana creating a stringent policy towards presenting a valid form of identification has sent a message those whose cost is too high to obtain identification do not have a voice in their government. A perhaps unintended consequence of this policy,

however, is rather straightforward, turning away legal American citizens and stripping them of their right to participate in their civic duty.

Voting registration was mentioned briefly and could itself become its voting barrier, even without voter identification laws in place. The way a state sets up certain times and frequencies to be able to register becomes a hassle to the voter, who then needs to measure its cost and keep up to date these decisions (Brians and Grofman 1999). Some states have decided voters can register the day of an election if they choose. The hope for a more relaxed voter registration period would encourage those of low-income status to go and vote instead of worrying about travel and time commitment.

Level of information could also play a significant role in how voter identification laws take effect on the American voter. Those highly informed may see the necessity in order to have their voice be heard in government, while those with lower informed may not be aware of the opportunities of even voting. The degree of being informed may be due to level of education. Education of the individual voter should be considered even when discussing voter identification laws. The need to make education a top priority in civic matters and educate citizens on laws can be confusing is paramount. Some voters will need assistance in the voting process; however, due to learning disabilities (Bell, McKay, and Phillips 2001).

Criminal Suppression of Voters

Criminals are an example of those who are unintendedly, or with intent, stripped of their right to vote. Not only have they committed crimes worthy in the public opinion to no longer have a voice in their government, but it could become more difficult for them to obtain a form of identification. The question begins with whether these people should be stripped off their voice in government? Does this sort of thinking dehumanize a criminal and as such, become counterproductive to the rehabilitation process as we send criminals to jail? Shapiro believes this group of individuals have become disenfranchised and could present a large voter block who does not have a voice in government.

Criminals do have the fundamental American right to be able to cast their vote, even if found guilty of the crimes they have committed. The level of crime is looked at in order to determine whether these criminals retain their fundamental human rights. Those who are found guilty of murder, however, have stripped others of their fundamental human right to life and thus should not be allowed to vote. Those who have committed petty crimes, as deemed by the court, should still be allowed to have their voices heard within the government. Stripping criminals the right to vote is a barrier often overlooked by American citizens. The United States is responsible for more people incarcerated than any other country in the world, and the fact that these individuals do not have a say in their government, who has dictated their sentence, seems hypocritical.

A Way to Pass Voter ID in a Race Neutral Manner

In all actuality, a legitimate election would serve for the benefit of both parties when the results are finalized, and one candidate is declared the winner. Ambiguity can lead to a distrust of the system which can either lead to a lack of voter participation in the next election cycle or a constant state of recounting that becomes stressful on the American election system. Out of the millions of votes cast every election year at the local, state, and federal levels, only a handful have been found as an issue of voter fraud. Those who desire complete transparency in election results, with no cases of voter fraud, are asking almost the impossible. People filling out ballots incorrectly present a more likely form of fraud than being allowed to vote without proper identification. If individuals can vote without presentation of identification, but others cannot, friction is created between demographics.

A way in which a balance can be maintained, where voter fraud is deterred while still encouraging electoral participation, may present itself in a compromise. A poll was taken in which they sought people who had to pick which one was more important, the prevention of voter fraud or the polling venues to vote (Atkeson, Alvarez, Hall, and Sinclair 2010). Most people agree voter ID laws prevent voter fraud; however, people also believe the access to polling venues in order to vote is essential (Atkeson, Alvarez, Hall, and Sinclair 2010). Most American voters believe voting rights should be extended to all eligible voters.

The public and popular opinion would appear to favor both sides of the argument. The hope then would be a compromise would take place and voter ID laws would be less strict, where voters may only have to provide an ID when they register, or perhaps only if

they change polling venues. Instead, there can be little hope of a change of these types of partisanship issues when a lack of compromise has become rampant in government in recent years. There is a chance voter ID laws could potentially become bipartisan and can put peoples' minds at ease about voter fraud, while still not being allowed to marginalize specific individuals.

The more information readily available will ultimately help voters and legislators make informed decisions on whether voter identification laws should be in effect. The information gathered has affected the truth of the effect voter identification laws have had on the voter. Scholars have focused on different aspects of how voter ID laws can affect different groups of people within America. Scholars agreed and disagreed on effects, but most have found there is some significance these laws have had in discouraging specific individuals from casting their ballot.

Information plays an integral part in whether voter ID laws have a negative impact on turnout. The Supreme Court has already ruled they are constitutional, but not everything that has been deemed constitutional has been correct. If more information is available which points to the marginalization of a select group from voting, voter ID laws should not be allowed. If voter ID laws help curb a large portion of voter fraud without marginalizing a group or type of people, then they seem to have done their intended consequence. The research presented does not give a clear indication of which, if either, side of the argument is correct. The best case is more information made accessible for the individual to determine what they believe should be the fate of voter ID laws.

At what level, racial or other, do we see this sort of marginalization when discussing voter ID laws? Something needs doing for those who feel discriminated

against in casting their vote for whom they want to represent them within the government. There also needs to have some set of protections against voter fraud to encourage the American voter that their vote will count and the election to be fair. If people do not feel like an election is transparent, voters will ultimately be discouraged from participating, and the democratic aspects of our government deteriorate. Balances and compromises must be reached in order to fill both basic needs. The scholars who have done the research have further shed light on this highly debated topic, but more research needs to be done to increase its understanding further. The research will add to this already growing field of study in hopes of finding some solution through careful analysis of the findings.

Data and Methods

I developed my own method of testing and categorizing each state's voter ID laws which, to my knowledge, hasn't been seen in any other study conducted thus far. The data pulled is a combination from the United States Election Project, The Almanac of Political Science, and the U.S. Census Bureau which provided the most complete data available to test. I test voter turnout rates among each state across the span of nine cycles starting from 2000 until 2016 every two years. Voter turnout rate is used, and this data was pulled from David McDonald's Election Survey. The turnout rate is critical in testing whether a state's ID laws cause turnout to decrease overtime. Voter ID laws are measured on a scale capturing with the severity of the voter ID laws in each state in each election year. The categorization is based off the voter ID law at hand at the time of the election cycle. State voter ID laws change over time. I have captured that by measuring the difficulty of a state's laws each election cycle.

Gathering data for each state throughout a period for elections is an arduous process. Having this data table available and being able to easily update will help other scholars provide more in-depth studies looking into Voter ID laws. Determining voter turnout and each state's individual ID law over time is the longest process. Over time, injunctions and public opinion have changed how voter ID laws are implemented. I went back in state records on law changes in order to account and change its category. For the data to be completely accurate, the category changes over time needs to be accounted for.

Each state is also broken up according to each region where the state resides. The categorization for each region of the United States is 0 through 5. A categorization of a zero is for states that are a part of the east coast. States within the Midwest are

categorized as a 1, southern states are a 2, and the Southwest states are a 3. States that reside in the west and on the west coast are categorized as 4 and 5, due to their geological location within the United States. Categorization for regions in the United States becomes significant in the study in order to test if a region has a more significant amount of strict voter ID laws that in turn suppress voter turnout at that level. The states regional data becomes important in the model in order to effectively test if their statistical significance at a regional level of voter suppression.

State Voter ID Law Characterization

0	1	2	3	4
Alabama(2000-2012)	Alaska(2000-2016)	Alabama(2014-2016)	Arizona(2004-2016)	Georgia(2006-2016)
Arizona(2000-2012)	Arkansas(2014-2016)	Delaware(2000-2016)	Hawaii(2000-2014)	Indiana(2006-2016)
Arkansas(2000-2012)	Colorado(2000-2016)	Idaho(2000-2016)	North Carolina(2014)	Kansas(2012-2016)
California(2000-2016)	Connecticut(2000-2016)	Indiana(2000-2004)	Ohio(2006-2016)	Pennsylvania(2012)
Florida(2000-2016)	Georgia(2000-2004)	Louisiana(2000-2016)	Texas(2012-2016)	Tennessee(2012-2016)
Hawaii(2016)	Kentucky(2000-2016)	Michigan(2000-2016)		Virginia(2016)
Illinois(2000-2016)	Missouri(2002-2016)	New Hampshire(2012-2016)		Wisconsin(2016)
Iowa(2000-2016)	Montana(2004-2016)	North Carolina(2016)		
Kansas(2000-2010)	Oklahoma(2010-2016)	Rhode Island(2014-2016)		
Maine(2000-2016)	Rhode Island(2012)	Texas(2000-2010)		
Maryland(2000-2016)	South Carolina(2000-2016)			
Massachusetts(2000-2016)	Tennessee(2000-2010)			
Missouri(2000)	Utah(2016)			
Montana(2000-2002)	Washington(2016)			
Nebraska(2000-2016)	Wisconsin(2000-2014)			
Nevada(2000-2016)	Virginia(2000-2014)			
New Hampshire(2000-2010)	Wyoming(2000-2016)			
New Jersey(2000-2016)				
New Mexico(2000-2016)				
New York(2000-2016)				
North Carolina(2000-2012)				
North Dakota(2000-2016)				
Ohio(2000-2010)				
Oklahoma(2000-2008)				
Oregon(2000-2016)				
Pennsylvania(2000-2010)(2014-2016)				
Rhode Island(2000-2010)				
Utah(2000-2014)				
Vermont(2000-2016)				
Washington(2000-2014)				
West Virginia(2000-2016)				
Utah(2000-2014)				
District of Columbia(2000-2016)				

Table 1

The creation, and in some cases objections, to these laws was subject to change in many states. The most severe of these laws were categorized as a (4). A four means the voter must be able to provide a photo identification of themselves, issued by the state or federal government, with an expiration date at the time of casting a vote or they will not be allowed to cast a ballot. This will be called a strict, photo id required policy.

Less severe voter ID law states are categorized as (3). The states categorized have a strict-non-photo ID policy but does not require a photo. This policy requires voters present a form of government issued identification in order to vote. This form of identification is not required to have a photo on it, however. State issued forms of identification such as a library card or even birth certificate will be enough even though these forms do not have a photo on them. In some states such as New Jersey a copy of a utility bill is enough to meet this requirement.

States which fall under the less-strict, no-photo id required policy are categorized as a (2). These states have a policy in place and can be enacted at any time. If this type of policy is enforced voters unable to produce identification are still more than likely able to still cast their ballot. This will be up to the discretion of poll workers according to state policy. There is flexibility in what is an acceptable form of identification. Anywhere from a driver's license to school transcripts are acceptable. A few states are included in this group are Alabama, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, and Idaho.

State are categorized as a (1) would fall under the category of a non-strict, non-photo ID. An example of a few of these states would be a lot of states (Connecticut, Wisconsin, and Wyoming) before the Indiana law enacted in 2004. A (1) would be categorized as a vague set of laws not well defined. Enforcement of the law would result

in confusion and possible legal action according to the written policy of that state. Since the law is poorly written and confusing, enforcement at the time of voting is the least likely. Many states before 2004 either had indefinite voter ID laws (1) or no voter ID laws at all.

Using table 1, each state is shown how they are categorized. Some states, indicated by the year, change their voter ID policy. I have indicated that each state and the year that the policy falls under. Pennsylvania had an injunction placed upon their 2012 strict voter ID policy, so therefore in 2004-2016 they did not have a policy during that time period.

The states with no voter ID law on record are categorized as (0). A (0) would mean that there is no possible way in which a law can be enforced since it does not exist. The only requirement for the voter is to register at their polling location before the election. States are most categorized as a (0) before the 2010 election. A zero can also be categorized for a state that has a hold on their voter ID law. Pennsylvania put an injunction on their voter ID law on the record, which would default that no enforcement. The categorization will stay until the injunction was lifted or the law was removed/changed. As time progresses, the amount of states with no voter ID laws on hand decrease significantly.

Population of a state is an important variable when considering voter suppression. The population percentages found in this study comes from the Almanac of Political Science (2000-2016). The breakdown of state by state and by each year in which population does fluctuate over time. Voting eligible population is the number of voters eligible and voters participating in the election are also from the almanac. I used

population to measure the number of voters eligible in the election and to determine the ethnic population of a state. Population is an important variable to consider in seeing if higher or lower population states would become more likely to adopt higher voter ID laws. If states with a higher population are more likely to draft strict voter ID laws, this will lead to a larger suppression of voter turnout.

Income and unemployment have also been used in order to test whether income can influence voter turnout. The income statistics have also come from the Almanac of Political Science. The median household income is broken down by each state. The fluctuations between income and unemployment was used in order to test statistical significance. Income was tested in order to see a significance in a decrease in voter turnout. States that would have a lower median income would likely have a lower voter turnout, such as past research has shown. The cost of following voter ID procedures for voters in the strict states state with lower median income would be much higher. The mean and median for total income is \$49,239 and \$48,060 respectively.

General population of all state citizens is used in the data and the total mean is 75.2%. The median of the total population of all states is 78.6%. General population becomes significant data because states could have a correlation between population and the severity of their voter ID laws on file. Population ethnicity is also collected in this study. I collected this data because of the possibility of statistical significance in the suppression of a select group of the state's voter population. Other studies (Hajnal 2017, 2018) have also exclusively looked at voter suppression on minority groups, so the data collected will help in furthering the study in that section as well.

This study used a linear regression in order to test the strength of voter ID laws against the voter turnout among each state. The election cycle starts in 2000 and finished in 2016 and only encompasses general and off-year elections. The regression analysis used clustering by state. This is in recognition that each state is in the data multiple times and is, therefore, not an independent trial. Cluster adjusts the standard errors in order to account for this. The overtime change in the laws is important to the study for answering more accurately of how exactly each year and voter turnout decreases the voter turnout for each state. This is one of the first studies that will accurately measure the voter ID laws over a set period, not only of not whether the law is on the record but how it severe it is on voting rights.

Results

Table 2.1 shows presents results after the estimation of models testing the two hypotheses. The hypothesis predicted the stricter the voter ID requirements of each state, the lower turnout will be. This was tested by the variable measuring the restrictiveness of the voter ID laws in each state, with voter turnout being the dependent variable. As can be seen the coefficient of the variable is significant in categories 3 and 4. This means as states voter ID laws become stricter, they will influence voter turnout in elections. The results support the hypothesis. Substantively, this means voter ID laws do in fact influence voter turnout in elections.

Data has shown that the only statistical significance on voter turnout is through strict voter ID laws. The control variables do not have any sort of significance on how voter turnout is recorded at the state. Since the hypothesis is supported, the next step needs to be determined on how much significance strict voter ID laws have on voter turnouts in those states.

Hypothesis two predicted lower-income populations were less likely to vote in states with strict voter ID laws. This was tested by the variable income and as shown the coefficient of the variable is insignificant by the p value being 2.61 and greater than .05. This means income is not significant in determining the likelihood of voter turnout in states with voter ID laws. The results fail to find support for this hypothesis. Substantively, this means income is not accurate in determining voter turnout. Table 2.2 shows the mean and median of general and non-general elections.

Effect of Voter ID Laws on Voter Turnout

Key Variables	Coefficient	Standard Error	T Statistic	Significance
Voter ID Law				
1	0.0063	0.1344	0.47	0.63
2	0.0089	0.1308	0.68	0.497
3	-0.013	0.1942	-0.67***	0.505
4	-0.345	0.1907	-1.81***	0.076
Control Variables				
Turnout	0.187	0.007	26.49	0.000***
Income	2.61	5.207	5.01	0.000***
Unemployment	0.0037	0.0016	2.25	0.029*
Population	0.1875	0.034	5.51	0.0000***
Constant	0.1263	0.0373	3.39	0.001***
t=p<.1	*=p<.05	**=p<.01	***=p<.001	

Table 2.1

Mean and Median of Voter Turnout

	Mean	Median
General Election		
Turnout	2,028,023	1,459,525
Income	45,551	45,008
Unemployment	4.80%	4.90%
Population	5,569,329	3,936,499
Non-General Election		
Turnout	2,142,209	1,469,878
Income	53,848	53,328
Unemployment	6.64%	6.40%
Population	6,201,164	4,398,928

Table 2.2

Conclusion and Discussion

Studying voter ID policies becomes important in the political science community. The effects that these laws have in voter suppression is alarming. As more states are adopting stricter ID laws, the evidence shown in this study that voter turnout is being affected. This study hopes to enhance other research done on this topic by providing data that is arduous in obtaining for all states over a period. Since studies on voter ID laws tend to look at a single state or region with voter ID laws (Hajnal 2018, Jost 2017, Atkeson 2014, Hood 2012, Baretto 2009, Hood 2008), the data provided can be used to build upon these already substantial studies. As more time and information becomes available, the data can also be built upon to be kept up to date. As more elections are held and more states change their voter ID policy, the data this study provides can also be updated. Scholars need to be able to provide evidence of the suppression of voters in order to educate state officials how detrimental these types of laws can be to the community.

Hypothesis one predicted that strict voter ID laws would have significance on voter turnout in the state. I have provided evidence that voter ID laws do indeed have a correlation on voter turnout in each state. My second hypothesis that income would influence voter turnout was found to not have any statistical significance. I determined that the correlation of voter turnout to voter ID laws was not due to income inequality.

What this means for the political community is there a way that states can pass a voter ID policy which doesn't influence voter turnout? I believe the cause for the effect is the rising cost to voters with strict voter ID laws. One suggestion could be helpful is policy which enables American citizens to receive state ID at no cost. Another policy

could be helpful in giving more opportunity for citizens to obtain an ID is through extending hours at certain BMV branches and streamlining obtaining an ID online to be shipped to your address. The extended hours and the online options would be able to reach those who work full time and are unable to take time off to secure an ID.

Not only should voter ID policy be changed in order to reduce the cost, there needs to be an additional study on how much impersonation is happening. If impersonation is not as widespread of a problem as it is claimed to be, then the purpose of voter ID laws is irrelevant at best. Voter impersonation and voter fraud need to be distinguished as two separate topics of debate. Voter ID is a protection from impersonation not from voter fraud in general. Voter fraud can happen a multitude of ways, and most cannot be prevented by voter ID policy.

One way in which this study can be improved is, as more information about voter ID laws becomes available the more accurate voter ID laws can be measured. The recency of these policies makes information difficult to ascertain. The compiling and categorization of states voter ID laws and severity of them is beneficial for those scholars looking to further the research. As states change the severity of their voter ID laws, the data will be updated. Since the study has determined there is a statistical significance on voter turnout from states with the strictest voter ID laws, the next step would be to determine what the impact on the voters is. The contribution of the availability of the data set will help further research for scholars looking to continue studying voter ID laws.

Data that was obtained will advance the available data needed for more in-depth research into voter ID laws. Since the study shows data availability from 2000 through 2016 as more elections happen, more data can be added into the table. States are more

likely to either modify or repeal altogether their own respective voter ID laws. The data set will be able to account for these changes through being able to label how strict the voter ID law is.

A challenge that will need to be addressed in voter ID laws is the overtime effect strict laws put in place will have on voter turnout. As more elections happen in states with strict voter ID laws, pulling data from past elections proves more difficult. This study helps by providing the data set needed to accurately categorize all data needed to test. As politics shift away from voter ID laws, the effects these laws have could become marginalized. Suppression of voters becomes a huge problem if not addressed accordingly. Providing a data table necessary to test and finding statistical significance furthers the discussion of these laws.

The ability of the state to efficiently and effectively allow someone to obtain a valid form of identification set by the state to remove the cost as much as possible is needed. A cost could become problematic to eliminate is the cost of travel or even having the time to take off work in order to obtain. Having these costs reduced could not only potentially raise voter turnout amount all voters but could also allow individuals with other basic needs in order to present identification. The state needs to educate its people on what needs to be required and the importance of having identification to reduce the marginalization of individuals. As stated early, education could provide a massive opportunity in having people understand this importance at an early age when they can legally participate in voting rights.

Voter identification laws have become not only a hotly debated issue in the past ten years but have also become an extremely partisan one. The partisanship started by the

perceptive exclusion from one or multiple groups of voters who have tended to vote for one party or the other. Even though it is highly doubtful the party put these laws intended to marginalize a race or economic status of specific voters, but should not be ruled out, this party attempted to increase transparency in election results and to make voter fraud virtually impossible to commit. The research has shown voter fraud will continue to have some significance whether voter ID laws are strictly enforced or eliminated. Unfortunately, the unintended consequences of these types of voting barriers have not reached the goal put forth.

Marginalizing people by either race or economic standing while taking away their voice in government is directly against the ideals of American culture. Politicizing this issue in an increasingly polarized partisanship will not help alleviate the problem brought to attention. Instead, there needs to be an open dialogue and more research put forth in what the consequences of voter ID laws have made. The hope is the research conducted here will help to put forth more information out so voter ID laws can be looked at constructively.

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