

Republicans are pushing to drastically change the way you cast ballots

Explaining the SAVE America Act, which is getting a vote this week.

February 10, 2026



By [Amber Phillips](#)

As President Donald Trump calls for sweeping changes to election law — including saying that Republicans should “take over the voting” — Republicans in Congress are planning to vote this week on the SAVE America Act, which would make massive changes to how Americans vote ahead of November’s midterms.

They want to require all Americans to prove they are citizens when registering to vote, and to show an ID when voting in person or by mail, as well as make mail voting more difficult.

Trump and Republicans say this would make voters feel more confident there’s no fraud in federal elections. “We need elections where people aren’t able to cheat,” Trump [told NBC News](#). “And we’re gonna do that. I’m gonna do that. I’m gonna get it done.”

But there’s [no evidence of widespread election fraud](#). There is evidence, say some nonpartisan elections experts, that this bill could [disenfranchise millions of eligible voters](#) by requiring new voters to provide documents that tens of millions of U.S. citizens lack immediate access to.

The nonpartisan [Campaign Legal Center](#) asserts the bill “is harmful to our democracy and a threat to the freedom to vote for all Americans. ... Its extreme documentation requirements would actually amount to one of the harshest voter suppression laws nationwide.”

Here’s how the SAVE Act could dramatically change elections and its chance of becoming law.

There would be three major changes to how Americans vote

1. You'd have to provide a proof of citizenship to register to vote: Millions of Americans register to vote every year, and they are already required to verify they are citizens when they do. Under this bill, they'd have to prove it.

For example, those who change states, or are newly eligible to vote would have to provide proof of their citizenship, like a passport, a military ID submitted with proof of place of birth, or — when submitted alongside other documents — a birth certificate. Newly married voters who change their last name would have to reregister to vote with all of these documents — plus provide proof as to why their current name doesn't match their birth certificate.

But about half of Americans don't have passports, and not all Americans have a copy of their birth certificate.

“Our research shows that more than 21 million Americans lack ready access to those documents,” writes the nonpartisan Brennan Center for Justice.

Even some Republican election experts have questioned whether all this documentation is necessary.

“The premise of the SAVE Act is we need to ensure there are processes that confirm citizenship,” says Matt Germer, director of the governance program at the R Street Institute, a conservative think tank. “But I think much of the burden of citizenship verification should be on the government, which holds much of this data in the first place.”

2. It requires IDs to vote nationwide: Strong majorities of Americans, including Democrats, support voters presenting a photo ID to cast ballots.

Only government (state, tribal, or federal) IDs would be accepted.

3. It would probably make voting by mail more difficult: Mail-in voting is popular and safe, say election experts. Almost all states offer some form of it. Trump has voted by mail, and Republicans certainly use it too.

But this bill would put strict restrictions on who can vote by mail without providing valid identification. Some disabled voters and active duty troops would be exempt from the new rules.

Some Republican election officials have expressed concern this takes away from states' constitutional right to run their own elections how they best see fit. Mail-in voting first became popular among rural conservatives in Western states.

“When I was in office,” former Kentucky secretary of state Trey Grayson said in a recent interview, “the number one principle of election administration was that the states run elections and Congress should be minimally involved. On the Republican side, we really believed that. It was really, really important.”

Democrats are adamant this doesn't become law

The bill could pass the Republican-controlled House this week, but in the Senate, Democrats plan to block the legislation by filibustering it.

“It’s Jim Crow 2.0,” Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-New York) told [MS NOW](#) recently. “What they’re trying to do here is the same thing that was done in the South for decades to prevent people of color from voting.”

This isn’t the first time Republicans have tried to pass some version of the bill, and Trump has been increasingly vocal about election reform. Some of his ideas [appear blatantly unconstitutional](#). But that hasn’t stopped the president from arguing for them.

What readers are saying

The comments overwhelmingly criticize the SAVE America Act, viewing it as a Republican strategy for voter suppression rather than a genuine effort to prevent fraud. Many commenters argue that the act disproportionately affects women, particularly those who change their last name... [Show more](#)

This summary is AI-generated. AI can make mistakes and this summary is not a replacement for reading the comments.

