



FEMINIST MAJORITY FOUNDATION

CHOICES CAMPUS LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

WORLD'S LARGEST PRO-CHOICE STUDENT NETWORK

VOTER SUPPRESSION: GET OUT HER VOTE 2017

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WHAT IS VOTER SUPPRESSION?

Voter suppression can be defined as any effort that is put in place to disenfranchise or discourage certain groups within the electorate from exercising their constitutional right to vote. While voter suppression sounds like a thing of the past, there have been increasing attacks on voting access for people of color—particularly Black and Latina/o voters, low income people, students and elderly women. According to Ballotpedia, 31 states enforced voter identification requirements in 2016, with 18 states requiring voters to give photo identification and 15 accepting another form of identification. One of the reasons 2016 elections were so impactful is because this was the first national election that felt the effects of removal of essential protections in the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Many were affected by targeted voter suppression which harmed the electorate in various ways.

WHO IS AFFECTED BY VOTER SUPPRESSION?

Voter suppression affects the whole political process, but has particularly severe effects on Black and Latina/o voters, low income people and families, the elderly, and students. By taking certain voters out of the democratic process, it is the clearest way to ensure that discriminatory laws, policies and procedures are passed and kept in place only to benefit a very small percentage of the population

An example of the law being used to control the vote are the new voter ID laws many Southern states passed following the removal of Section Four of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in 2013. The Supreme Court case, *Shelby County v. Holder*, held that it was unconstitutional for certain states with a history of voter disenfranchisement to go through a process of prior approval from the Supreme Court before they could make any changes to their voting laws. With the removal of this key section, states are free to write the law and interpret it as they see fit in regards to voting access.

“The jurisdiction must establish that the proposed voting change does not have the purpose and will not have the effect of denying or abridging the right to vote on account of race or color or membership in a language minority group.”

- Section Four, Voting Rights Act of 1965

HOW DO AUTHORITIES SUPPRESS THE VOTE?

There are many ways that people can have their votes suppressed. Some methods of voter suppression are gerrymandering, passing harsh voter identification laws, eliminating early voting, Sunday voting and same day registration, reducing voting machines in targeted districts, moving precincts to make them inaccessible to voters, voter roll purges and others.

Regulations such as these are usually presented as a way to protect the public from voter fraud and to keep the democratic process honest—however; they create strategic road blocks for many voters. By changing voting accessibility, requiring unnecessary identification and redrawing district maps to suit a particular party, the process is manipulated and discredits the value of the vote.

Gerrymandering, or drawing legislative district lines to underrepresent a targeted constituency or favor a particular party serves to devalue a person's vote and violates the concept of one person, one vote.

WHAT CAN I DO?

I'm glad you asked! There are many ways you can defend the right to vote in your state.

- Make sure your campus is briefed on all materials they may need for voting, since the type of identification required varies from state to state. For detailed voter ID requirements by state, visit the National Conference of State Legislators at www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-id.aspx.



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- Familiarize yourself with the Higher Education Act of 1998. This federal act requires higher education institutions to make a “good faith effort” to provide voter registration forms to all students. Work with your campus administration to be sure that they are fulfilling the mandates put forth in the Higher Education Act to ensure your campus is voter friendly. It’s your right!
- Partner with local nonpartisan groups who are working on voter defense initiatives to get trained in voter defense and legal observation. Your testimony and witness could be used valuably if someone’s rights are being suppressed at the polls.