

What's at Stake: Republicans Advance Measures to Limit Access to the Ballot Box while House Democrats Work to Protect the Right to Vote

Following former President Trump's Big Lie that the 2020 election was stolen, Republican officials are advancing legislation that imperils the right to vote and makes it harder for millions of Americans to cast their ballot. According to a recent report by the [Brennan Center](#), nearly 400 voting-restrictive measures have been introduced in 48 states across the country. As of May, 14 states had enacted 22 of these measures into law.

Voting rights are foundational to our democracy and House Democrats remain committed to ensuring Americans have equal access to the ballot. That's why House Democrats passed H.R.1, the For the People Act, in March 2021-- comprehensive legislation to make government work more effectively and efficiently for the people it serves. As the Senate votes today to begin consideration of companion legislation, S.1, here's a look at what's at stake:

GOP VOTING RESTRICTIONS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Driven by the Big Lie, Republicans in state houses across the country are advancing laws designed to limit access to the ballot box, denying Americans – particularly Americans of color – their right to vote. A number of measures would make it easier for them to overturn election results they don't like. Here's a look at just a few of these measures:

GEORGIA

“Georgia Republicans on Thursday passed a sweeping law to restrict voting access in the state, introducing **more rigid voter identification requirements for absentee balloting, limiting drop boxes** and **expanding the Legislature's power over elections.**” [The New York Times, [4/3/21](#)]

“The fundamental truth about SB 202 is this: Its **very existence is predicated on a lie**. The bill's passage was motivated by unfounded claims of fraud in the Georgia presidential elections — lies that Donald Trump spread and continues to spread, with the help of both state and national Republicans.” [Vox, [4/3/21](#)]

“[SB 202] effectively bars third-party groups or anyone else who is not an election worker from **providing food and water to voters waiting in line**. Long lines for voting in Georgia are an unfortunate reality...During the primary election last June, when temperatures hovered above 80 degrees with high humidity, multiple voting locations across the state had lines in which voters waited more than two hours.” [The New York Times, [4/2/21](#)]

TEXAS

“Senate Bill 7, the GOP’s priority voting bill, emerged Saturday from a conference committee as an expansive bill that would touch nearly the entire voting process, including provisions to **limit early voting hours, curtail local voting options** and **further tighten voting by mail**, among several other provisions.” [The Texas Tribune, [5/30/21](#)]

“The legislation is full of what are becoming **standard suppression tactics**—most of which **burden people of color**, who in 2020 overwhelmingly voted Democratic—and includes measures that would, for example, allow a judge to overturn an election result simply if a challenger claimed, without any proof, that fraudulent votes changed the outcome.” [The New Yorker, [4/2/21](#)]

“America’s largest red state already has some of the tightest voting restrictions in the country and is regularly cited by nonpartisan groups as a state where voting is especially difficult. It was one of the few states that **did not make it easier to vote by mail during the coronavirus pandemic**, instead sending droves of voters to the polls to cast their ballots in person.” [NBC Dallas Fort Worth, [5/30/21](#)]

“The bill **targeted voting methods that Black and Latino voters in Houston used widely** in the pandemic. Senate Bill 7 outlawed two kinds of early voting methods established last year in Harris County, home of Houston, to give voters more opportunities to vote safely and crowd-free during the pandemic: drive-up voting and 24-hour voting.” [The Washington Post, [5/3/21](#)]

ARIZONA

“Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey on Tuesday signed legislation **purging infrequent voters** from a list of those who automatically get a mail-in ballot each election, ignoring protests from Democrats and prominent business leaders who said the measure would **suppress the votes of people of color.**” [The Associated Press, [5/11/21](#)]

“According to Democratic Arizona Secretary of State Katie Hobbs, who opposes the legislative action, **75% of Arizonans are members of the permanent early voting list** and **80% of Arizonans used the early voting mechanism** to cast ballots in the 2020 election.” [ABC News, [5/11/21](#)]

“The bill **purges voters from the mail voting list** even if they choose to cast a ballot in person on the same voter registration, according to Eliza Sweren-Becker, an attorney at the Brennan Center for Justice tracking voting legislation around the country.” [NBC News, [5/11/21](#)]

FLORIDA

“Gov. Ron DeSantis went on Fox and Friends Thursday morning to sign into law a controversial voting restrictions bill passed last week by Florida lawmakers. The GOP-backed legislation, which the governor has been a vocal supporter of, places new **limits on ballot drop boxes**, among other things.” [WTSP 10, [5/6/21](#)]

“It **adds hurdles to vote by mail**: Voters must reapply for mail ballots every two years, rather than the four years in the present law. Thankfully, this requirement won’t start immediately, as bill sponsor Sen. Dennis Baxley, R-Ocala, originally proposed. That would have instantly stripped millions of Floridians of their mail ballot requests, with many not even knowing it... These actions and more, including tighter limits on who may turn in mailed ballots, are obviously **aimed at curbing the voting power of young people and people of color** — an uneasy echo of the Jim Crow era’s ugly efforts to keep Black people from the ballot box.” [The Palm Beach Post Editorial Board, [5/5/21](#)]

ABOUT THE FOR THE PEOPLE ACT

The For the People Act, introduced in the House as H.R. 1 and in the Senate as S.1, includes critically important measures that seek to make government work for the people it serves, clean up corruption, and protect the right to vote. H.R. 1 passed the House on March 3; this bill will strengthen access to the ballot box and make it easier for Americans to vote, put in place national redistricting reform, end the influence of dark money in politics, and strengthen election security to safeguard our elections.

This legislation would:

- Expand access to the ballot through automatic registration for eligible voters, allowing same-day registration, and promoting online registration.
- Restore the full protection of the Voting Rights Act and reform redistricting processes to prevent partisan gerrymandering of congressional districts.
- Prevent eligible voters from being arbitrarily purged from voter rolls by enacting new safeguards.
- Promote cybersecurity measures to prevent election hacking and improve election administration.

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT THE FOR THE PEOPLE ACT

As Republicans nationwide attempt to restrict the right to vote, editorial boards across the country are speaking out in support of ensuring equitable access to the ballot box:

The Washington Post Editorial Board: “Any truly democratic system should make it as easy as possible to exercise one’s right to vote while maintaining the system’s integrity. H.R. 1 understands that we’ve succeeded remarkably well on the latter count, and focuses instead on the former, by reducing restrictions that have no practical effect except making it more difficult for some Americans to vote.” [\[3/28/21\]](#)

The New York Times Editorial Board: “If the political reforms in H.R. 1 are not undertaken at the federal level, Republican leaders will continue to entrench minority rule. That’s happening already in states like Wisconsin and North Carolina, where Republican-drawn maps give them large legislative majorities despite winning fewer votes statewide than Democrats. It’s happening in dozens of other states that have passed hundreds of voting restrictions and are pushing hundreds more, under the guise of protecting election security... The point of H.R. 1 is not to help Democrats. It is to rebuild and reinforce the crumbling foundations of American self-government and abolish voter restrictions erected for explicitly partisan gain — a federal law that would protect all voters.” [\[03/11/21\]](#)

The USA Today Editorial Board: “The issue is breathtakingly simple: **Passing H.R. 1 would make it easier to vote**, building off the resounding success of the 2020 election, when more Americans than ever cast ballots. Rejecting H.R. 1 would make it harder to vote, particularly as Republican legislatures across the country institute “reforms” that would limit balloting.” [\[3/17/21\]](#)

The Baltimore Sun Editorial Board: “...In sum, what H.R.1 attempts to do is fix much of what is broken in this nation’s election system, chiefly by making voting more accessible, ending partisan redistricting, raising ethical standards, and exposing and reducing the influence of big money in politics.” [\[03/05/21\]](#)

The LA Times Editorial Board: “Other states with Republican-controlled legislatures may pass even worse laws making it harder for voters — especially people of color — to exercise the franchise. That raises the stakes for election legislation in Congress. **It’s imperative that Congress enact the core voting provisions of the For the People Act** — including requirements that states allow wide use of mail-in ballots and provide a minimum number of days for early voting — as well as a provision entrusting congressional redistricting to independent commissions.” [\[4/4/21\]](#)

The Houston Chronicle Editorial Board: “That hasn’t stopped Texas from trying, of course, as the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals noted in the voter ID case: ‘every redistricting cycle since 1970, Texas has been found to have violated’ the Voting Rights Act, ‘with racially gerrymandered districts.’ Texas, the court added, ‘is the only state with this consistent record of objections to such statewide plans.’ This record is why Texans cannot trust our Legislature to craft fair voting laws and why we should welcome the central tenets of the For the People Act.” [\[6/6/21\]](#)