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## Examining Voter Rights

ONU Institute for Civics and Public Policy

Kennedy Aikey  
*Ohio Northern University*

Hailey Trimpey  
*Ohio Northern University*

Kennedy Cook  
*Ohio Northern University*

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**By: Kennedy Aikey, Hailey Trimpey, and Kennedy Cook**

**Examining Voter Rights**

**Introduction**

In 1965, the Voting Rights Act was passed by Congress and secured the right to vote for every American, however, there is a difference between the right to vote and the accessibility in casting this vote. The right and accessibility to vote are key aspects to ensuring everyone is able to cast their vote, and by extension, voice their opinions as to what is best for our country. In the wake of the 2020 election, there has been an increase in state laws that target different elements of voting. To some, these laws are designed to increase “voter integrity.” To others, these laws amount to “voter suppression.” Low voter confidence is an issue our country faces. Trust in the electoral process has waned in recent years, which has a negative effect upon the confidence citizens have in government. Voting Rights has been broadcast as a partisan issue, however it is one that affects all members of society.

**Question #1: Voter Suppression vs. Electoral Integrity**

Voter Suppression typically consists of efforts that make voting harder for specific groups. Today, voter suppression is claimed to occur through the purging of voter records, limiting the number of polling locations in specific areas, understaffing polling locations, putting restrictions on mail-in or absentee ballots, creating onerous voter identification laws, placing limits on when one can register to vote, and limiting the amount of time individuals can vote early. Voter suppression can also occur through voter intimidation or through the spread of misinformation. It is argued these attempts to slow voter participation create hurdles, making it harder for people to vote.

Conversely, electoral integrity focuses on efforts to minimize voter fraud and other illegal activities associated with voting. Proponents of voter integrity laws claim that they help ensure that voters can trust the results of an election which strengthens their confidence in political institutions. This can then increase voter turnout and civic engagement. If voters believe that their voices are being heard and taken seriously, they are more likely to engage in politics to hold their representatives accountable. Trust in the electoral process is an important aspect of democracy which is why electoral integrity is essential.

**Question #2: Why are voters' rights important for voter turnout?**

When voters have access and feel confident in the electoral process, this promotes better voter turnout which promotes greater trust in the political system. It should also yield a more representative, responsive and accountable government. The controversy between voter accessibility and voter integrity has concerned many that voter trust has been decreasing. Studies have shown that access to early voting and mail-in ballots have not historically

benefitted one party over another, but that their presence does tend to increase voter turnout. This accessibility and convenience is theoretically a benefit to all Americans given the emphasis upon voting and accountability in our democracy.

Political equality is a key feature of American politics and voting rights are important to protect in order to uphold this principle. Equal voting rights should not not advantage one political party over another. With high voter turnout numbers, elections should become a better representation of what the American people want out of the government.

### **Question #3: How can we improve upon voting rights?**

Voting rights have improved greatly since the founding of our nation, but there is still more room for growth. As society changes, it is important that our practices appropriately adapt to these changes. The government must ensure that everyone has roughly the same ability to vote, whether that is through the traditional means of waiting in line and casting a ballot in person or using mail-in voting. Currently, five states conduct their elections solely through mail-in voting. No-excuse absentee voting, early voting, and the use of “drop boxes,” have become more popular over the years and are referred to as “convenience voting” by political scientists. There is widespread public opinion approval for these methods and there is likewise wide support for voter identification laws.

Although it is very important to ensure each American citizen is given the ability to cast their vote, it is just as important to make sure votes are legitimate. The government needs to take steps to help voters trust the electoral process. Due to the amount of different ways citizens are able to vote, the government also needs to ensure that each vote is legitimate. This can be a difficult task because some of these accessible voting tactics are new. A balance must be achieved that will allow citizens across the country to vote, while also ensuring that each vote is valid.

### **Parting Thoughts:**

Voting Rights have been an issue in the United States since the founding of this country. It is important to guarantee that anyone who is eligible to vote is able to do so, free from undue obstacles. Election analysts, the Courts, and political scientists [have found very few instances of actual voter fraud](#) over the years. An electoral process that is accessible and resistant to fraud is both possible and largely in place.