

"Social justice should be the underlying goal of all humanity."

-Alan V. Lowenstein, Institute Founder



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do social justice.

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Dear Governor Sherrill,

This week, our organizations were proud to stand with you to celebrate the passage of New Jersey's own state voting rights act – the strongest in the country – and to send the clear message to New Jerseyans that your administration is committed to strengthening New Jersey's democracy.

It is on the heels of this landmark achievement that we write to express significant concern with your recent statement that you would support the passage of new voter ID requirements here in New Jersey.

We know you understand the gravity of the SAVE America Act that is being proposed by Congress and the Trump Administration. The SAVE America Act is a dangerous and anti-democratic piece of legislation meant to disenfranchise voters by, among other dangerous provisions, requiring stringent voter ID requirements at registration that millions of Americans cannot meet. This federal legislation does not make elections fairer or more secure – it serves no purpose other than to make voting harder and cast doubt on our democratic process.

While the SAVE America Act is an extreme tool of voter suppression, it is important we remember that any voter ID law is also a tool of voter suppression.

While these laws may seem reasonable or benign at first glance, the truth is they actively harm voters, especially voters of color. Voter ID laws place barriers to the ballot box for many eligible voters. A recent study found that nearly 29 million U.S. citizens of voting age lack a valid driver's license and over 7 million have no other form of non-expired government-issued photo ID.¹ Of these, young people aged 18-29 and people of color are less likely to have valid photo ID.² Citizens of color are almost four times more likely than white citizens to not have a current government-issued ID.³

In addition to voters of color and young people, voter ID laws also have a disproportionate impact on rural voters, low-income voters, older voters,⁴ Native voters, students, people who change their name, LGBTQ voters and more.⁵

There are many reasons people may not have valid photo ID. For example, they might not have access to the many identification documents, like birth certificates or social security cards, needed to apply for one.⁶ Or they may face socioeconomic hardships that prevent them from obtaining ID, or they may not have a physical address to provide for one.⁷ The overall cost to secure ID for voting can be prohibitively expensive for many residents⁸ and given New Jersey's

\$600,000 racial wealth gap – one of the highest in the nation⁹ – that economic burden would fall disproportionately on Black and other people of color.

For decades, studies have shown that more stringent voter ID requirements lead to lower voter turnout.¹⁰ Black and other voters of color are more likely to be deterred from voting when voter ID is required because they are much more likely to lack certain specific forms of identification and may face greater barriers when obtaining them.¹¹ In states that have previously adopted voter ID requirements, the negative effect on voter turnout has persisted even after those laws are repealed.¹²

Further, voter ID laws also cause immense voter confusion. Surveys in states with restrictive and complex voting laws show that a significant number of voters do not understand the ID requirements to vote in their states.¹³ In Georgia, 21% of people were unsure whether they were required to show ID when voting in person, and 2% incorrectly said they were not required to show ID when voting in person. About 46% of Georgian voters did not know that the ID must be a photo ID. In Texas, these numbers were even higher at 24%, 3%, and 54% respectively.¹⁴

The cumulative effect of these laws is voter suppression and voters in states that have passed them have borne the brunt of those consequences. For example, a mere few hours after the U.S. Supreme Court shamefully struck down Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act in 2013, Texas immediately passed a strict voter ID law.¹⁵ As a result of that law, over 600,000 registered Texans were disenfranchised.¹⁶ Born out of Jim Crow, this is the discriminatory legacy of voter ID laws.

Furthermore, more stringent voter ID requirements would not have prevented the 2023-2024 voter registration errors at MVC. Improperly registered individuals added to the voter rolls would still have been allowed to vote with a valid voter ID.

Notably, New Jersey already has identification requirements. In order to register to vote, potential voters must provide a driver's license number or the last four digits of their social security number, along with their address. If a voter cannot be verified, they are asked to show ID when they first go to cast their vote. We do not need voter ID requirements stricter than this at registration or at the polls.

Voter ID laws do nothing but construct barriers to the ballot and suppress voter turnout. Even the mere discussion of this is exacerbating confusion and anxiety among New Jersey voters, leaving them unsure of what they must do in order to vote. The last thing we should be doing, especially in this moment, is passing our own suppressive laws that make it harder to vote and sow distrust among voters. At this pivotal moment, we cannot afford to give the proponents of the SAVE America Act, or of any other spurious attack on our democracy, even an inch.

With the passage of the John R. Lewis Voter Empowerment Act and the court victory in *US v. Caldwell* this week, your administration has proven that you are willing to stand up to federal pressure and double down on democracy. The voters see someone willing to fight for them.

We urge you to continue that fight by unequivocally rejecting the notion of voter ID laws in New Jersey.

Sincerely,

AAPI New Jersey

ACLU of New Jersey

League of Women Voters of NJ (LWVNJ)

NAACP NJ State Conference

New Jersey Institute for Social Justice

Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC-NJ)

Salvation and Social Justice

cc:

Lieutenant Governor Dale Caldwell

Senate President Nicholas Scutari

Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin

¹ *In the News: “UMD Analysis: Millions of Americans Don’t Have ID Required to Vote,”* Center for Democracy and Civic Engagement (Apr. 2023), <https://cdce.umd.edu/news/news-umd-analysis-millions-americans-don%E2%80%99t-have-id-required-vote>.

² *Id.*

³ *RESEARCH: Is it Hard to Get an ID? Yes, It Can Be.,* VoteRiders, <https://voteriders.org/article/voteriders-research/> (last accessed July 30, 2026).

⁴ Many older voters are also less likely to have valid photo ID because they stop driving and do not obtain alternative state ID when their driver license expires. Jessica Brock, *Impact of Voter ID on Older Adults*, American Bar Association (Sep. 23, 2024), https://www.americanbar.org/groups/senior_lawyers/resources/voice-of-experience/2024-september/impact-of-voter-id-laws-on-older-adults/.

⁵ Brady Horine, *What’s So Bad About Voter ID Laws?*, League of Women Voters (May 23, 2023), <https://www.lwv.org/blog/whats-so-bad-about-voter-id-laws>.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Richard Sobel, *The High Cost of ‘Free’ Photo Voter Identification Cards*, Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race & Justice Harvard Law School (June 2014), *available at* <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Harvard%20Institute%20for%20Race%20and%20Justice%20Full%20Report%20Voter%20ID%20June%202014.pdf>.

⁹ *The Two New Jerseys: A Deepening Divide*, New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, *available at* <https://njisj.org/print/deepeningdivide.pdf> (last accessed July 30, 2026).

¹⁰ Timothy Vercellotti and David Anderson, *Protecting the franchise, or restricting it? The effects of voter identification requirements on turnout*, Paper for the American Political Science Association (2006), *available at* https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/d/download_file_50903.pdf?inline=1.

¹¹ Justin Grimmer and Jesse Yoder, *The durable differential deterrent effect of strict photo identification laws*, Political Science Research and Methods (Jan. 28, 2021), <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/political-science-research-and-methods/article/abs/durable-differential-deterrent-effects-of-strict-photo-identification-laws/E97B3308FDA75972A6374EDCD26333BF>.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ Cora Henry, *Citizens in Texas and Georgia Don’t Understand Voter ID Laws, Survey Shows*, Brennan Center for Justice (Dec. 2, 2024), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/citizens-texas-and-georgia-dont-understand-voter-id-laws-survey-shows>.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Ed Pilkington, *Texas rushes ahead with voter ID law after supreme court decision*, The Guardian (Jun 25, 2013), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/25/texas-voter-id-supreme-court-decision>.

¹⁶ Erika Eichelberger, *Texas Just Won the Right to Disenfranchise 600,000 People. It's Not the First Time.*, Mother Jones (Oct. 21, 2014), <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/10/supreme-court-texas-voter-id-law-history/>.