



DECLARATION FOR AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

March, 28, 2025

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives
568 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
2267 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bryan Steil
Chairman
Committee on House Administration
1309 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Joe Morelle
Ranking Member
Committee on House Administration
1216 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Jeffries, Chairman Steil, and Ranking Member Morelle,

On behalf of the Declaration for American Democracy (DFAD), a coalition of more than 260 local, state and national organizations working to strengthen U.S. democracy, and the undersigned organizations, we write in strong opposition to H.R. 22, the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act.

Congress has a constitutional responsibility to safeguard free and fair elections and ensure all American citizens can freely, securely, and easily exercise their right to vote. The SAVE Act represents a dangerous departure from fulfilling this duty, and as currently written, this bill will make it significantly harder, if not outright impossible, for millions of Republican, Democratic, and independent voters to register to vote and have their voices heard. The SAVE Act would place the burden on every single American citizen to prove their citizenship when registering to vote or updating their voter registration, chiefly by either presenting a passport or a birth certificate in person. In practice, the SAVE Act would up-end online voter registration, a practice in 42 states, make it impossible for Americans to register to vote by mail, and put an end to voter registration drives nationwide. The only feasible way for every single American citizen to register to vote or update their registration – including for an address or party change – would be to do so in person.

Federal law already states that it is illegal for non-U.S. citizens to register to vote or cast a ballot in a federal election (18 U.S. C. § 1015). It's an existing crime that is punishable by up to five years in prison. Election officials already use extensive state and federal data, including citizenship data, to verify an individual's eligibility to cast a ballot and Americans must already provide either the last four digits of their social security number or driver's license number when registering to vote to enable officials to verify their identity and eligibility.

Research indicates that more than nine percent of voting-age citizens, 21.3 million Americans, do not have proof of citizenship readily available, while at least 3.8 million do not have these documents at all due to loss, damage, or theft.¹

Data from the U.S. Department of State shows that approximately only half of all American citizens possess a passport meaning that half of all American citizens would not be able to provide one of the primary acceptable forms of documentation required by the legislation.² Nationwide, more than 140 million Americans do not possess a passport, and specifically, data indicates that approximately 3.1 million Louisiana citizens, 5.1 million New York citizens, and 3.3 million Wisconsin citizens do not possess a passport.³ Americans who have completed less education or have lower income are also far less likely to have a passport, making this a socio-economic issue that would disproportionately impact working-class Americans. Additionally, older Americans are less likely than younger citizens to have a passport.

Surveys also show that eight in ten married women have changed their surname, meaning they do not possess a birth certificate that matches their current legal name and therefore could not present it as valid proof of citizenship.⁴ Nationwide, this would mean that as many as 69 million women could not use their birth certificate to prove their identity or citizenship status.⁵ This would impact as many as 1 million women in Louisiana, 1.3 million women in Wisconsin, and 3.8 million women in New York.⁶

The SAVE Act could also prevent victims of natural disasters, such as hurricanes and wildfires, from being able to register to vote in cases where their passport or original birth certificate was lost or damaged. Citizens who move more often as well as rural citizens will also be greatly impacted by these strict requirements as they will be required to resubmit, in person, the required documentation every time they update their voter registration. Many civil rights groups have also warned that naturalized citizens and citizens of color would likely face even greater discrimination under the legislation when trying to access the ballot box.

Introduction of the SAVE Act is the most recent example of a string of schemes to make voting more difficult for citizens, while hiding behind a thin veil of disinformation promoting false narratives of wide-spread voter fraud. Even President Trump's Presidential Advisory Committee on Election Integrity was disbanded after it was not able to find evidence of widespread voter fraud in U.S. elections.⁷ Despite overwhelming evidence attesting to the integrity of federal elections, many Americans continue to voice concerns about our elections – we encourage Congress to be receptive to those concerns, but it must do so responsibly and constitutionally. Instead of proceeding with this dangerous bill, Congress should take actions that will strengthen our elections and ensure that all eligible voters have access to the ballot box.

¹Kevin Moris, Cora Henry, "Millions of Americans Don't Have Documents Proving Their Citizenship Readily Available, The Brennan Center for Justice," June 11, 2024, available at

<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/millions-americans-dont-have-documents-proving-their-citizenship-readily>

²U.S. Department of State, "Return to Pre-Pandemic Passport Processing Times" December 18, 2023, available at <https://2021-2025.state.gov/return-to-pre-pandemic-passport-processing-times/>; Greta Bedekovics, Sydney Bryant, Data on Passport Possession and Marital Name Changes, Center for American Progress,

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1EtEiNIPRVH1VGhF4sK30bf75UqCzRotsxNkgwL58M/edit?gid=0#gid=0>

³Greta Bedekovics, Sydney Bryant, "The SAVE Act would Disenfranchise Millions of Citizens," Center for American Progress, January 31, 2025, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-save-act-would-disenfranchise-millions-of-citizens/>

⁴Luona Lin, "About 8 in 10 women in opposite-sex marriages say they took their husband's last name," Pew Research Center <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/09/07/about-eight-in-ten-women-in-opposite-sex-marriages-say-they-took-their-husbands-last-name/>.

⁵Greta Bedekovics, Sydney Bryant, "The SAVE Act would Disenfranchise Millions of Citizens," Center for American Progress, January 31, 2025, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-save-act-would-disenfranchise-millions-of-citizens/>

⁶Ibid.

⁷Marina Villanueva, "Report: Trump commission did not find widespread voter fraud." Associated Press, August 3, 2018, available at <https://apnews.com/article/f5f6a73b2af546ee97816bb35e82c18d>.

If you have any questions, please contact Greta Bedekovics, Associate Director of Democracy Policy at the Center for American Progress at gbedekovics@americanprogress.org and Aaron Scherb, Senior Director of Legislative Affairs at Common Cause at ascherb@commoncause.org.

Sincerely,

215 People's Alliance

20/20 Vision

Accountable.US

Action Together Northeastern Pennsylvania

AFL-CIO

AFT

All On The Line

All Voting is Local Action

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

American Humanist Association

Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote)

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action

Black Voters Matter Fund

Carolina for All Education Foundation

Center for Common Ground

Center for Media and Democracy

Chispa LCV

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)

Clean Elections Texas

Coalition on Human Needs

Common Cause

CommonDefense.us

Communications Workers of America

Courage California

Defend The Vote Action Fund

DemCast USA

Democracy 21

Democracy Maine

Democracy Matters

Democracy SENTRY

Demos Action

Eastbay Activist Alliance, Postcards

Eden Area Interfaith Council

End Citizens United

Fair Fight Action

Faith in Action

Faiths for Safe Water

Field Team 6

Fix Democracy First
Fourth Branch Action
Franciscan Action Network
Generation Vote
Georgia Coalition for the Peoples Agenda
Get Free
Greenpeace USA
Indivisible
Informing Democracy
ISAIAH (MN)
Jewish Community Action
League of Conservation Voters
League of Women Voters of the United States
Living Table United Church of Christ
Living United for Change in Arizona (LUCHA)
March to the Polls
MarchOnHarrisburg
Markers For Democracy
Maryland Poor People's Campaign
Michiganders for Fair and Transparent Elections
Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance (MUUSJA)
MomsRising
MoveOn
MOVI, Money Out Voters In
National Action Network
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
National Wildlife Federation
NC NAACP
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
NextGen America
North Carolina For The People Action
Oregonizers
OutFront Minnesota
Peace Action
People For the American Way
People Power United
Popular Democracy
Prism
Progress Arizona
Project On Government Oversight
Public Citizen
Reboot Our Democracy
RepresentUs
ReSisters
Rise Up WV
Seed the Vote

SEIU
Showing Up for Racial Justice
Sister District Project
SMART Legislation
Stand Up America
State Democracy Defenders Action
Supermajority
Take Back Christianity
The Civics Center
The Workers Circle
Transformative Justice Coalition
Transparency International U.S.
UltraViolet Action
Unitarian Universalist Association
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
Voices for Progress
Voices Of Community Activists & Leaders (VOCAL-KY)
VoPro Pros
Voter Participation Center
Voters Not Politicians
WALKING TO FIX OUR DEMOCRACY
We Choose Us
Wisconsin Democracy Campaign
Women of Color Coalition

Cc: Representative Chip Roy