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## **Issue Brief: How Voter ID Laws Attempt To Suppress the African American Vote.**

### **Key Words**

African American, Voter ID Laws, Voter Suppression

### **Description**

This issue brief takes a look at how the voter ID laws of various states seek to suppress the vote of the African American population, despite any proof of voter fraud being a major issue in the United States.

### **Key Points**

- 17 states have passed legislation requiring state government-issued identification to vote.
- African Americans are less likely to possess state-issued identification than any other race
- Approximately 700,000 young minority voters were denied voting privileges in the November 2012 election due to Voter ID laws.
- The majority of the states passing Voter ID laws are Republican-majority legislatures.

### **Issue Brief**

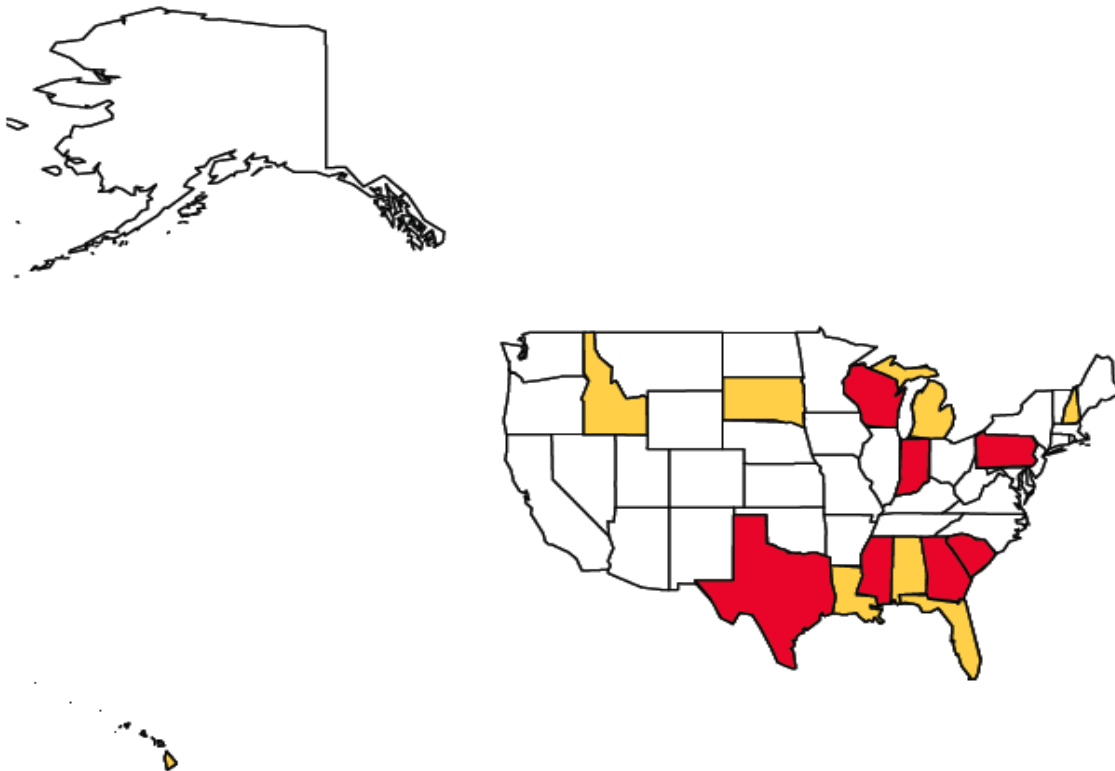
In November 2012 presidential election, there was great focus by the Democratic Party and minority action groups on minority voter suppression attempts by the GOP at the polls. However, the greatest minority voter suppression attempts were not executed at the polls but, rather in the state legislatures of multiple states. Results show that the 2012 presidential election yielded the greatest African American voter turnout in American history which proves that the GOP's voter suppression at the polls was not effective however, they were effective in stopping an even larger number of minorities from voting before the polls even opened.

Discriminatory laws passed by 17 Republican-majority legislatures denied approximately 700,000 young minority voters the right to vote in November 2012 election. According to the Associated Press, in the 2004 election, 44 percent of African Americans between the age of 18-24 voted, 20.4 percent of young Latino Americans voted and 23.4 percent of young Asian Americans voted. In the 2008 Presidential election the percentage of voters of these young minority groups drastically grew to 52.3 percent of young African Americans, 27.4 percent young Latino Americans and 27.8 percent of young Asian Americans voted. The increase in young minority voters has seems to have triggered the legislatures of 17 states to pass Voter ID laws requiring a photo identification to be presented by the voter in order to participate in the election.

While the Voter ID laws may seem to be harmless or just a precautionary measure to deter voter fraud, a deeper look into the statistics of minorities possessing such identification uncovers a possible plot for the Republican Party to suppress the vote of the young, minority American; not to mention amount of voter fraud cases is negligible to even warrant such laws.

Based on a study conducted by the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University, 25 percent of African Americans and 16 percent of Latino Americans are less likely to have such identification compared to only nine percent of their white counterparts. It is also important to look at the demographics of the states that have passed such laws. Taking a microscopic look at Florida and Texas, it is discovered that both states require photo identification bearing a signature. Texas' Voter ID laws, known as SB 14 and being named the most stringent in the country by a District of Columbia District Court, required voters not in possession of proper identification to have to pay \$22 for the proper paperwork to get identification and the voter may have had to travel 250 miles round trip in order to obtain the proper identification. Florida passed its' law requiring photo ID with a signature approximately the same time that recent polls showed President Obama ahead by fewer than five percentage points with an increasing number of Democratic voters registering to vote in the state.

Figure 1: States with Voter Photo Identification Laws



States shown in red require photo identification to cast a valid ballot. States shown in gold request photo identification but make available a limited set of alternative arrangements if voters do not have or choose not to show photo identification. Note: Alabama, Mississippi, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Texas all require preclearance from the Justice Department before these laws can go into effect.

In order to combat the Republican Party's efforts to suppress the young minority vote in America, The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has filed numerous motions in the Federal District Court to combat the discriminatory identification laws. As a result to the

ACLU's efforts, the United States District Court rejected the laws passed by both Florida and Texas, stating that "undisputed evidence" shows the laws disproportionately affect the poor and minority populations in both states and while the Federal Courts aimed to maintain the sovereignty of the state, they also recognized the fact that discriminatory laws used to suppress the poor and minority votes cannot stand.

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