

Top Ten Priorities for State Voting Rights Reform

- 1. Make Election Officials Nonpartisan:** Election officials on the state or county level must be nonpartisan, not running for office, and not involved in political campaigns. Voting machine manufacturers and companies that handle ballots should not endorse or contribute to political candidates.
- 2. Ensure Fairer Distribution of and Increase Resources:** Wealthier precincts and low-income precincts should receive equal treatment. States must set a uniform standard for the number of polling places, poll workers, translators, voting machines, ballots, and voter roll books per number of voters in a precinct. States should standardize training for poll workers and county election officials. Sufficient resources must be available to process voter registration applications, handle early voting ballots, and count provisional ballots, including resources to catch and correct mistakes.
- 3. Simplify Voter Registration:** Allow voters to register at the polls on Election Day. Prohibit the use of technicalities, such as superfluous check boxes, to reject applications. Allow sufficient time for voters to cure problem registrations before Election Day.
- 4. Allow Early Voting:** Enable voters to vote early by mail or in person to increase turn out and reduce crowds at the polls.
- 5. Send Polling Place Notices and Sample Ballots:** Notify voters of their polling place or if a site has moved, and mandate early distribution of sample ballots. These steps will reduce the use of provisional ballots, shorten long lines, and help avert ballot design errors.
- 6. Give Poll Workers the Day Off:** Many states simply cannot recruit the poll workers they need to process voters on Election Day. Requiring employers to give poll workers the day off will increase the numbers, and improve the quality, of poll workers. Additional time off could be provided to enable the state to provide more extensive training to poll workers.
- 7. Mandate Paper Trails:** Whether voting electronically, on paper, or through voting machines, voters must have confidence that they were able to vote as intended. Electronic voting machines must have paper trails in the event of a recount. Ballots and voting technology should be uniform throughout the state.
- 8. Get Rid of Challengers:** Well-trained poll workers and election officials can verify voter eligibility without the interference of challengers who disrupt voting and intimidate voters. At a minimum, states should strengthen standards for challenges and increase penalties for abusive challenges.
- 9. Count Provisional Ballots:** Count provisional ballots even if they are cast in wrong polling place, precinct, or county. Develop and advertise uniform state rules well before Election Day on how and when provisional ballots will be counted.
- 10. Keep More Voters on the Rolls:** Rescind laws barring ex-felons from voting and make restoration of the right automatic. Tighten rules for voter purges to avoid disenfranchisement.