



March 28, 2025

RE: Reject the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act (“SAVE Act”)

Dear Members of Congress:

State Democracy Defenders Action (“SDDA”) strongly urges you to oppose the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act (“SAVE Act”), H.R. 22.¹ SDDA is a nonpartisan organization committed to defending democracy against the growing threat of autocracy. We build bipartisan coalitions to combat voter suppression, defend election integrity, and protect marginalized communities most vulnerable to the collapse of American democracy. Through this work, we understand that the SAVE Act is not just an attack on voter access—it is a calculated first step toward institutionalizing an authoritarian government.

The SAVE Act is a sweeping and dangerous overreach by the federal government that would upend long-standing voter registration practices under the guise of election integrity. By requiring documentary proof of citizenship (“DPOC”) as a prerequisite to register for federal elections, the bill creates an unnecessary and punitive barrier to the ballot box—one that could disenfranchise millions of eligible voters.² It explicitly disqualifies widely accepted forms of identification, including driver’s licenses, military IDs, and Tribal IDs, unless accompanied by additional documentation. Even birth certificates are rendered inadequate for those whose legal names have changed, such as married women or transgender individuals.³

The Act would effectively dismantle proven and accessible registration methods—such as online and mail-in registration—by forcing voters to submit DPOC in person. This requirement alone would decimate access for rural, disabled, elderly, and low-income voters. Moreover, the bill’s reliance on flawed and error-prone government databases for citizenship verification opens the door to mass disenfranchisement, particularly for Black, Brown, naturalized, and immigrant communities whose records are more likely to be incomplete or mismatched. Alarming, the Act also threatens public servants with draconian criminal penalties—up to five years in prison—for simple administrative or clerical mistakes.⁴ This

¹ The Safeguard American Eligibility Act, H.R. 8281, 118th Cong. (2023-2024).
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/8281/text>

² *Id.* at § 2(b).

³ *Id.* at § 2(e).

⁴ *Id.* at § 2(j).



chilling provision will deter election officials from doing their jobs and further destabilize an already overburdened electoral system.

These measures are particularly troubling given that they are redundant and unsupported by any evidence or legislative need. Existing federal and state laws already require individuals to affirm or verify their citizenship status during voter registration, and states have robust systems in place to maintain accurate voter rolls. This combination of federal and state law and regulations have successfully reduced the incidence of ineligible voting to near statistical insignificance.⁵ It therefore serves no practical purpose in strengthening election integrity and instead empowers anti-democratic forces and silences the very communities that have fought hardest to access the ballot.

It is hard to escape the conclusion that the SAVE Act is not a serious attempt to protect democracy—but a calculated move to undermine it. Far from strengthening our multiracial participatory democracy, the bill appears designed to institutionalize authoritarian control by weaponizing fear, disinformation, and racial division to suppress the vote. At a time when free and fair elections are under relentless attack, this legislation fuels the flames of election subversion under the false pretense of combating fraud.⁶ In 2023 alone, lawmakers introduced 356 anti-voter bills across 47 states—part of a coordinated assault on the freedom to vote.⁷ In states like Florida and Texas, these attacks have escalated into something even more dangerous: the creation of so-called “election police” tasked with targeting and prosecuting voters—disproportionately Black voters—for innocent errors or misunderstandings about eligibility.⁸

⁵ Brennan Center for Justice, [Debunking the Voter Fraud Myth](https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legal-work/Briefing_Memo_Debunking_Voter_Fraud_Myth.pdf) (Jan. 31, 2017), [https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legal-work/Briefing Memo Debunking Voter Fraud Myth.pdf](https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legal-work/Briefing_Memo_Debunking_Voter_Fraud_Myth.pdf)

⁶ Andrew Garber et al., [What Georgia Tells Us About the 2024 Election Subversion Campaign](https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/what-georgia-tells-us-about-2024-election-subversion-campaign), Brennan Center for Justice (Aug. 22, 2024), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/what-georgia-tells-us-about-2024-election-subversion-campaign>

⁷ Brennan Center for Justice, [Voting Laws Roundup: 2023 in Review](https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/voting-laws-roundup-2023-review) (Jan. 18, 2024), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/voting-laws-roundup-2023-review>

⁸ Sara Carter, [Florida and Texas Go After Voters for Honest Mistakes](https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/florida-and-texas-go-after-voters-honest-mistakes), Brennan Center for Justice (May 16, 2023), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/florida-and-texas-go-after-voters-honest-mistakes>



The urgency of rejecting the SAVE Act has only grown in light of President Trump’s recent unlawful executive order⁹—a brazen attempt to seize power he does not possess by unilaterally rewriting election rules. This executive order would impose burdensome documentation requirements that millions of eligible Americans cannot readily meet, including the demand for a U.S. passport—despite the fact that over 146 million Americans, disproportionately rural, working-class, and low-income, do not have one.¹⁰ Even more disturbingly, the order proposes outsourcing voter registration systems and personal voter data to Elon Musk’s tech firm DOGE, raising serious security and privacy concerns. While Trump lacks the authority to enforce these sweeping changes, Congress does have the power to codify them—and that’s precisely what the SAVE Act would do.

Members of Congress have a constitutional and moral obligation to shield their constituents from deliberate attacks on their fundamental rights. **That responsibility is more urgent than ever.** Meeting this moment requires more than caution—it demands bold, principled action to reject policies rooted in fear, exclusion, and authoritarian control. As our democracy stands at a crossroads, the States Democracy Defenders Action (SDDA) urges you to oppose the SAVE Act in no uncertain terms. Stand with the voters in your district—and across the country—who deserve not just access to the ballot, but a government that defends their right to be heard.

This is not election security. This is voter suppression, plain and simple.

We remain ready to collaborate and provide support in advancing equitable and inclusive solutions.

Sincerely,
**State Democracy
Defenders Action**

⁹ Exec. Order “Preserving and Protecting the Integrity of American Elections”; <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/preserving-and-protecting-the-integrity-of-american-elections/>

¹⁰ Greta Bedekovis, et al., [The Save Act Would Disenfranchise Millions of Citizens](https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-save-act-would-disenfranchise-millions-of-citizens/), Center of American Progress (last updated Feb. 3, 2025), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-save-act-would-disenfranchise-millions-of-citizens/>