

Trump Executive Order on Voting Denounced as 'Authoritarian Power Grab'

Pro-democracy critics warn the presidential directive "represents a significant overreach of executive power and poses a direct threat to the fundamental right to vote."

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Voting rights groups and pro-democracy advocates responded with uproar after President Donald Trump on Tuesday evening issued what they warn amounts to a far-reaching "authoritarian power grab" in the form of an "unlawful" executive order that would restrict voter access nationwide and punish states that make it easier for citizens to have their political preferences registered at the ballot box.

The official executive order—under the Orwellian header "Preserving and Protecting the Integrity of American Elections"—would do the very opposite, warn critics, by making it more difficult for tens of millions of eligible U.S. citizens to cast their ballots in state and national elections.

The order, said Brett Edkins, managing director for policy and political affairs with the progressive advocacy group Stand Up America, "is a blatant effort to usurp state and congressional authority over our elections and stop millions of American citizens from voting."

***"This is a blatant attack on democracy." —Lisa Gilbert,
Public Citizen***

"The order, which multiple legal experts say is likely illegal," Edkins continued, "threatens to punish states that do not comply and could potentially disenfranchise any American who doesn't have a passport. It even invites Elon Musk's DOGE to help enforce the measures. This isn't about securing our elections—it's voter suppression, plain and simple."

The ACLU said the presidential directive "represents a significant overreach of executive power and poses a direct threat to the fundamental right to vote," in part by ordering—by fiat and without the consent of Congress—the Election Assistance Commission to alter the national mail voter registration form to require documentary proof of citizenship, such as a passport, to register to vote—something never needed in the nation's history.

Trump's order also attempts to force states to enact "documentary proof of citizenship requirements". It would force state election authorities, under threat of significant federal funds being withheld, to discard all absentee and mail-in ballots received after Election Day.

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Lisa Gilbert, co-director of Public Citizen, echoed others' critiques, saying the president's assault on voting rights represents the opposite of election integrity.

"This is a blatant attack on democracy and an authoritarian power grab," warned Gilbert. The executive order, she said, "would compromise our election systems, suppress the votes of millions of Americans, especially voters of color, and pave the way for still more Trumpian false claims of election fraud."

"A president does not set election law and never will," said Virginia Kase Solomón, president and CEO of the pro-democracy group Common Cause.

"Trump's executive action is an attempt to take away our right to vote or make it so hard that we don't participate. The people reject these tactics. Common Cause and our members will fight voter suppression wherever it shows up,

including in the White House, because voting is a right for the many, not a selected few. This executive order will not stand."

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—Virginia Kase Solomón, Common Cause***

Sophia Lin Lakin, director of the ACLU's Voting Rights Project, warned that the executive order, if enforced, would disenfranchise tens of millions of eligible voters across the country, the very opposite of what making elections "honest and worth of public trust," as the order states. Lakin said the order is the latest in a long line of Republican-led efforts to exploit the myth of pervasive fraud—a myth the GOP created and right-wing media continues to perpetuate—as a way to diminish voting rights and ballot access.

"This measure will no doubt disproportionately impact historically excluded communities, including voters of color, naturalized citizens, people with disabilities, and the elderly, by pushing unnecessary barriers to the fundamental right to vote," Lakin said. "We deserve better than elected officials weaponizing xenophobia and the myth of voter fraud to jeopardize our rights. We will do everything in our power to stop this unconstitutional attack on the right to vote to ensure that every eligible American can participate in our democracy. We will see President Trump in court."