

Senate Bill 8: Voter Identification - Article 2

<https://www.commonwealthfoundation.org/research/voter-id-constitutional-amendment/>

Voter ID Constitutional Amendment

- Commonwealth Foundation
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Key Points

- Voter ID requirements improve election integrity, while voter turnout increases, without impacting election outcomes.
- Pennsylvania voters support Voter ID requirements by a wide margin, with support across all regions and demographic groups.
- Voter ID requirements are common throughout the country. Thirty-five states require an ID to vote; Pennsylvania is among the 15 states that do not.

Background

- Currently, Pennsylvania does [not](#) require identification to vote in person, unless it is the voter's first time voting in an election district.^[1]
 - Individuals voting absentee or via mail-in-ballot must provide a "valid and current" driver's license number or PennDOT ID. For voters without these, the state requires the last four digits of their Social Security number. And "only if" none of these are available, does Pennsylvania accept limited types of valid proof of identification.^[2]
- In 2012, the state enacted a voter ID law that was later [struck](#) down as unconstitutional due to issues with implementing the law.^[3] Specifically, the law made it difficult for low-income individuals to obtain the necessary identification.
 - Since then, voter trust in elections has dropped significantly. A 2022 [Gallup](#) poll found that only 63 percent of voters nationwide were "very or somewhat confident" ahead of the 2022 midterms that votes would be accurately cast and counted. This is a 12-point drop in confidence compared to the 2006 midterms.^[4]
- [House Bill 1300](#) was an election reform bill passed by the legislature in 2021,^[5] that provided for voter identification requirements. However, Gov. Tom Wolf [vetoed](#) HB 1300, citing the bill's voter ID requirements as a reason for his veto.^[6]
- Less than a month later, Wolf indicated that despite his veto, he was [not](#) completely opposed to voter ID requirements.^[7]

The Constitutional Amendment

- Senate Bill 1 [includes](#) a proposed constitutional amendment that would require voters to "present a valid identification before receiving a ballot to vote in person."^[8] Furthermore,

this proposed legislation requires voters not voting in person to “provide proof of a valid identification with his or her ballot.”

- The amendment would allow for multiple forms of ID, not just photo ID.
- The proposed amendment also provides **free government-issued IDs** to those without one, stating, “if a qualified elector does not possess a valid identification, he or she shall, upon request and confirmation of identity, be furnished with a government-issued Identification at no cost to the qualified elector.”
- Providing free identification addresses the implementation problems that the 2012 law faced.
- A voter ID constitutional amendment was introduced in May of 2021 as [SB 735](#).^[9] In June of 2021, this legislation passed the Senate with a bipartisan [vote](#).^[10]
 - Following this, the House amended SB 106 in December 2021, with bipartisan support, to include the voter ID constitutional amendment from SB 735. In July 2022, [SB 106](#) received bipartisan approval in both the [House](#) and [Senate](#).^{[11], [12]}
- If the House and Senate approve the amendment, now part of SB 1, during the 2023–24 legislative session, the voter ID constitutional amendment could be on the ballot as early as the 2023 primary election.
 - Constitutional amendments must pass in two consecutive legislative sessions to go on the ballot.
 - On January 9, 2023, SB 1 advanced out of the Senate State Government Committee with [bipartisan](#) support, and passed the Senate, again with bipartisan support, on January 11.^[13]

Voter ID and Turnout

- A study from the National Bureau of Economic Research found that voter ID [does not reduce turnout](#), nor does it have an impact on election outcomes.^[14]
- A [2015 study](#) determined that 93 percent of all voters already have a valid form of photo ID.^[15]
- Despite roughly two-thirds of the states being subject to a voter identification law, voter turnout in 2018 saw an historic surge. [Pew Research Center](#) analysts saw “historic jumps” among every racial group.^[16] Black turnout rose nearly 27 percent, outpacing the turnout increase among White voters. Hispanic and Asian voter turnout increased by 50 percent.
- In 2021, Georgia enacted Senate Bill 202, an election reform law that required proof of identity when absentee voting. President Biden [decried](#) the law as “Jim Crow.”^[17] Despite this, the state saw [record-breaking](#) turnout in the 2022 midterms.^[18]

Support for Voter ID

- Voter ID receives wide-ranging support nationally. A July 2021 poll from the Honest Elections Project shows that [81 percent of voters](#), support requiring identification to vote.^[19]

- High levels of support are also seen in [Pennsylvania polling](#): A June 2021 poll from Franklin and Marshall College found that 74 percent of respondents, including 77 percent of Independents, favored photo identification requirements.^[20]
- October 2022 [polling](#) from the Commonwealth Foundation revealed high levels of support for the proposed constitutional amendment in Pennsylvania, with 70 percent of respondents supporting the measure:
 - By voter registration, 91 percent of Republicans, 50 percent of Democrats, and 70 percent of independents support the amendment.
 - Support in Philadelphia was 57 percent, and 64 percent in the Philadelphia suburbs. Support was greater than 67 percent everywhere else in Pennsylvania.
 - By race, the amendment polled at 58 percent with African Americans and 66 percent with Hispanics.

Other States

- Thirty-five [states require](#) an ID to vote, with 18 requiring a photo ID and 17 allowing for certain non-photo IDs.^[21]
- In November 2018, voters in two states, [Arkansas](#) and [North Carolina](#), approved ballot measures to amend their state constitutions to require photo voter identification.^{[22], [23]}
- In 2022, voters in [Nebraska](#) approved a voter ID ballot initiative by a two to one margin.^[24]

Conclusion

Pennsylvania is among the minority of states that do not require proof of identification to vote in person. Such requirements are popular with voters and have no negative effects on turnout, or election outcomes. At a time where confidence in elections is dropping, Voter ID requirements protect the integrity of all votes and serve to rebuild trust in Pennsylvania's election process.