

Voter ID Laws

IN 2017 [AFTER the VRA was gutted by the *Shelby v. Holder* decision], *Newsweek* reported that a study showed that “the turnout gaps between white and ethnic minority voters are far higher in states where people must show ID during or after voting.” There is a 4.9 percent gap between Latino and white voters in states that do not require an ID, but this “leaps to a 13.2 percent” difference in states like Texas, North Carolina, Georgia, and Wisconsin. For African Americans, the gap “rises from 2.9 percent to 5.1 percent; among Asians, the gap increases from 6.5 percent to 11.5 percent.” In Wisconsin, 8.3 percent of white voters who were surveyed said they were “deterred” from voting in the 2016 election because of voter ID laws; that number more than tripled for African Americans (27.5 percent).

A Government Accountability Office report, wrote journalist

Sarah Childress in 2014, “suggests that voter ID laws are having an impact at the polls. Turnout dropped among both young people and African-Americans in Kansas and Tennessee after new voter ID requirements took effect in 2012.”

Another study posits, however, that it’s not the advent of voter ID laws but the confusion over what the correct identification is that actually drives down voter turnout. This also explains why states such as Texas, Georgia, and Indiana have mightily resisted expending virtually any resources on voter education about the new standards. Wisconsin, in fact, used a federal court’s ruling that upended the state’s ID law to sow even greater confusion about what the revised guidelines, post-court decision, actually were. The state’s flat-out refusal to train the staff at the Department of Motor Vehicles on the new court-ordered

requirements left Wisconsinites “at the mercy” of DMV employees who had no idea about the necessary documents and IDs required to vote.

The state’s willful defiance also led to a harsh rebuke from the judge who had already called Wisconsin’s efforts at credentialing voters a “wretched failure” because of the disparate impact on black and Latino Americans.

