

The Freedom to Vote Act

The **Freedom to Vote Act** was introduced by Senator Amy Klobachur earlier in September. The bill replaces the For the People Act and has the following co-sponsors: Senators Tim Kaine, Angus King, Joe Manchin, Jeff Merkely, Alex Padilla, Jon Tester, and Reverend Raphael Warnock. This bill has many of the features of the original For the People bill, but it does not include the ethics portion of the original. This bill is the result of much negotiation with bipartisan voices being heard. However, it may continue to require a revision of the filibuster rules in the Senate to allow passage. Both of these bills are greatly needed to set basic voting standards in all states. Here are the major features of this bill. Keep in mind as you read through this description that most of these features are the result of adopting best practices from a variety of states that already have these processes in their state level elections. These are not new and untested ideas!

I. Voter Access and Election Administration

This section includes provisions to advance voter access by implementing reliable state best practices for voter registration and election administration to ensure all Americans can easily exercise their freedom to vote regardless of where they live.

- **Automatic Voter Registration and Online Voter Registration:** Enacts an automatic voter registration system for each state through the state's motor vehicle agency and ensures voters in all states have access to online voter registration.
- **Election Day Holiday:** Makes Election Day a public holiday.
- **Uniform Early Voting:** Ensures voters have access to at least 15 consecutive days of early voting for federal elections, including two weekends, while accommodating small election jurisdictions and vote-by-mail jurisdictions.
- **Same Day Voter Registration:** Ensures every state offers same day registration at a limited number of locations for the 2022 elections and at all polling locations by 2024, allowing election officials, especially in rural areas, time to implement the new requirements.
- **Federal Minimum Standards on Vote by Mail and Drop Boxes:** Ensures all voters can request a mail-in ballot, improves the delivery of election mail, and puts in place minimum standards to ensure drop boxes are available and accessible to all voters.
- **Strengthens Voter List Maintenance Standards:** Requires that the removal of voters from the rolls is done on the basis of reliable and objective evidence and prohibits the use of returned mail sent by third parties to remove voters.
- **Counting of Provisional Ballots:** Requires provisional ballots to count for all eligible races within a county, regardless of the precinct they were cast in.
- **Standards for Voter Identification:** Promotes voter confidence and access by requiring a uniform national standard for states that requires identification for in-person voting, and

allowing voters to present a broad set of identification cards and documents in hard copy and digital form.

- **Voting Rights Restoration for Returning Citizens:** Restores the right to vote in federal elections for people who have served their time for felony convictions after they are released from prison.
- **Expanded Voting Access Protections for the Disabled, Native Americans, Military, Overseas Voters, and Underserved Communities:** Includes targeted protections to promote accessible voting to communities facing unique challenges.

II. Election Integrity

This section includes measures to promote confidence in elections, stop partisan election subversion, and protect against election interference, both foreign and domestic.

- **Preventing State Election Subversion:** Establishes federal protections to insulate nonpartisan state and local officials who administer federal elections from undue partisan interference or control.
- **Protection of Election Records, Election Infrastructure, and Ballot Tabulation:** Strengthens protections for federal election records and election infrastructure in order to protect the integrity and security of ballots and voting systems.
- **Voter-Verified Paper Ballots, Reliable Audits, and Voting System Upgrades:** Requires states to use voting systems that use paper ballots that can be verified by voters and to implement reliable post-election audits. Also provides grants for states to purchase new and more secure voting systems and make cybersecurity improvements.
- **Non-Partisan Election Official Recruitment and Training:** Tasks the Election Assistance Commission with developing model training programs to recruit a new generation of election workers and provides dedicated grants for training and recruitment.
- **Comprehensive Voting System Security Protections:** Puts in place election vendor cybersecurity standards, including standards for manufacturing and assembling voting machines, among other key security measures.
- **Establishing Duty to Report Foreign Election Interference:** Creates a reporting requirement for federal campaigns to disclose certain foreign contacts.

III. Civic Participation and Empowerment

This section includes provisions to prevent partisan manipulation of the redistricting process, establishes uniform disclosure standards for money in politics, and empowers states to make critical investments in their election systems.

- **Non-Partisan Redistricting Reform and Banning Partisan Gerrymandering:** Requires states to abide by specific criteria for congressional redistricting and makes judicial remedies available for states' failure to comply. Allows states to choose how to develop redistricting plans, including the option of having an independent redistricting commission.
- **Combatting Secret Money and Election Interference (*DISCLOSE Act and Honest Ads Act*):** Requires super PACs, 501(c)(4) groups, and other organizations spending money in elections to disclose donors and shuts down the use of transfers between organizations to cloak the identity of contributors. Ensures that political ads sold online have the same transparency and disclosure requirements as ads sold on TV, radio, and satellite.
- **State Election Assistance and Innovation Fund:** Establishes a self-sustaining fund to finance critical investments in state-led innovations for our democracy and election infrastructure. The fund is financed through an additional assessment paid on federal fines, penalties, and settlements for certain tax crimes and corporate malfeasance. States would be allotted an annual distribution for eligible democracy and election-related investments. States could select to access their full distribution or a partial distribution, or roll over their distribution for future use.
- **Nonpartisan Oversight of Federal Election Law:** Improves the ability of the Federal Election Commission to carry out oversight and enforcement responsibilities.
- **Stopping Illicit Super PAC Coordination:** Creates "coordinated spender" category to ensure single-candidate super PACs do not operate as arms of campaigns.

Please contact your Senators (U.S. Capitol Switchboard: 202-224-3121) and ask them to support these two bills. Or find their email contact information at [Senate.gov](https://www.senate.gov); check the upper left hand corner and find Alaska.