

Fact Sheet: Documentary Proof of Citizenship

What is a Documentary Proof of Citizenship Requirement to Register to Vote?

- Documentary proof of citizenship bills propose that before otherwise-eligible citizens can register to vote, **they must provide paperwork in addition to their voter registration form** showing that the person is a U.S. citizen. For most people, that would mean providing a passport or a birth certificate to register.
- Voters currently register in almost every state by simply swearing or affirming in writing under penalty of perjury that the person is a citizen.

Why It's Bad for Voters:

- When Kansas and Arizona implemented documentary proof requirements, they **blocked tens of thousands of eligible American citizens** from registering.
- Recent studies show that around **ten percent of voting-eligible Americans—millions of citizens—do not have documents** to prove their citizenship. If people cannot vote unless they show hard-to-get and expensive documents in order to register, it makes it **harder for citizens to vote**.
 - Those citizens are more likely to be low income people, women, and from communities of color, but include Americans across all political parties and demographic groups.
 - Women who have changed their name when getting married are less likely to have updated documentary proof.
- These paperwork requirements **shut down online voter registration** and make mail registration much harder, because even when people have the documents they need, they often can't access copiers or ways to submit them electronically.
- This policy **shuts down most community-based voter registration programs**, which help voters at shopping centers, churches, campuses, and other public places where people aren't likely to have a birth certificate or passport with them, even if they have them at home.

Why We Don't Need Documentary Proof of Citizenship to Have Fair Elections

- Excluding eligible citizens from voting because they don't have the listed paperwork **makes our elections less fair**.
- Voting by people who aren't U.S. citizens is incredibly **rare**, and when it happens it is often a **mistake**. The extremely harsh consequences of deportation and prison time for noncitizens are enough to make sure that **only citizens are voting** in state and federal elections.