

STATE ELECTION LAWS AND THEIR IMPACT ON INDIVIDUAL MINORITY
VOTER TURNOUT

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This thesis examines recent changes in state level voting laws and their effect on the turnout rate of different minority group voters. Individual states are in charge of conducting their own elections as well as having their own requirements for registering voters and early voting. There is no federal law or constitutional mandate that requires states to have similar election laws. but The Voting Rights Act of 1965 tried to ensure the laws passed do not disproportionately exclude certain citizens from the ability to vote. Because of this attempt to not exclude minority groups, election laws can vary widely by states and impact citizens of some minority groups. Some states have chosen to pass laws that make registering and voting more complicated, while others have tried to ensure that both are as easy as possible for each and every citizen. Voting laws can have negative consequences for many groups. Minority populations are often thought to be hit the hardest by many of these election reform laws. Some states have been passing more restrictive laws since 2000 and again in 2013 after section 4(b) of the Voting Rights Act was ruled unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court. This variance in election laws across states and across election years gives a perfect arena to further evaluate the potential effect. This analysis will look at comparing states from 2006 to 2014 in order to determine the effect of restrictive voting laws on turnout.

Aaron Dusso, Ph.D., Chair

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Introduction

The effects of election reforms on citizens are not trivial and should be properly understood. The government is involved in every citizen's life in one way or another and because of this the changing of election laws has a real impact on a citizen's ability to vote. Different election reforms can affect different groups of citizens. With the possibility of groups not being affected the same, the reforms need more study and this thesis adds to the overall research of election reforms. Election laws can focus on many different aspects of an Election; but of specific importance to this thesis are early voting reforms, voter registration reforms, and photo identification reforms.

The previous research on election reforms looks primarily at how turnout was affected in aggregate. There does appear to be conflicting findings on just who was affected and by how much. Different research methods and models are utilized to explore these research questions. The research does fall short in its understanding of how minority citizens are specifically affected.

Even in the short time since major changes started happening in regards to election reforms there has been a lot of activity. The versions of election reforms in modern history started happening in the 1970s. One of the biggest boost to election reforms came after the passage of the Help America Vote Act (2002). This law required states to meet certain standards and in order to meet them they would potentially need to pass legislation. The second boost to election reforms being passed was the Supreme Court case Crawford V. Marion County. This case affirmed that Indiana's requirement for government issued photo identification was constitutional and could be allowed to

continue. Many more laws have been passed and they will be discussed later in this thesis.

There has been turbulence in election reforms in recent years and months. The controversy and misunderstandings surrounding different election reforms makes for an important thesis topic and discussion. This thesis will look to answer two hypotheses specifically.

Hypothesis 1: In states with strict voter identification laws, the lower a state's aggregate education level, the lower voter turnout will be.

Hypothesis 2: In states with strict voter identification laws, the larger the minority population, the lower voter turnout will be.

A dataset was created to address these questions. This dataset contained data from the Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the Almanac of American Politics. Regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. In order to drill down to the level of detail I wanted I used interactions of key variables. By using a three-way interaction I was able to find the exact group of people most affected by requiring photo identification to vote.

Election reform research is every changing and will require additional study. It seems every year or even month a new state passes an election law or gets told their law is unconstitutional by a judge. The variation in scope and strictness of reform laws makes this topic one that will need to be constantly studied to ensure minority or disadvantaged citizens are not being impacted at a higher rate than the rest of citizens.

Chapter 1

History of Election Reforms

Since the first election in 1788, the United States has seen suffrage expand numerous times to allow new groups of people to vote, but not everyone chooses to exercise this right every election. While the choice to participate or not is a personal one, it can often be more difficult because the processes of getting registered and voting on Election Day are too cumbersome. In other words, the hurdles to voting can be quite high for some individuals.

Election administration is up to the individual states, but there are a few laws that the federal government has passed in which every state must follow. Having state legislatures in charge of their own laws regarding voting registration, absentee voting, early voting, and any other form of election administration means there is the potential for differences in the laws across states. States also allow the officials in charge of administering elections to be elected, possibly complicating the idea that they can be impartial and ensure all citizens are able to vote. Even with having officials in charge of election administration; elections have not been without their problems.

Lines at polling places throughout the years on Election Day are not unheard of. The issue coming to light in more recent years is the fact that some lines are getting much longer and are increasingly happening in areas dominated by minorities. These lines can reach as great as 5 hours in some areas. (Famighetti, Melillo, Perez 2014). There was also one election center in Northern Chicago during the 2014 election where the last voter did not cast his ballot until three a.m. on Wednesday. The voter that was last in line said he

was not going to be denied his right to vote and knew that was a sentiment others at the end of the line shared (Ford and Bowen 2014).

There were long lines at polling places in many different states in many different years; but there was also a long recount scandal during the 2000 election in Florida that delayed the official results of the presidential election for a little more than a month and caused other changes to happen. The other major controversy in Florida was the issues of the butterfly ballot. There were too many candidates to fit on one side of the ballot and the decision was made to put them on different pages so that when the ballot was opened each candidate's name alternated lines. This type of ballot was tough to read for many voters and they had a hard time knowing exactly for whom they cast their ballot. The problem with the ballots put the election results into question. When the vote totals came in on Election Night and George W. Bush and Al Gore were within a small margin of each other, there needed to be a recount. These butterfly ballots then made it hard for some counties to decide for whom the voter truly voted or if the vote was actually intended for another candidate. This election was so controversial and contentious that it needed to be decided by the Supreme Court of the United States of America (Toobin 2002). Luckily for voters, Congress passed the 2002 Help America Vote Act (HAVA) not too long after realizing the deficiencies in the electoral system after the disastrous 2000 election.

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 created new minimum election standards that all states were required to follow. HAVA also created the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), which is tasked with assisting the states with compliance with HAVA on top of distributing the funding that each state receives to help meet the

new minimum standards. HAVA requires that each state enact six procedures and programs: updated and upgraded voting equipment, statewide voter registration databases, voter identification procedures, provisional voting, voting information, and administrative complaint procedures. Indiana was the first state to take the HAVA voter identification requirement a step further and required identification of all voters. This law was challenged and was appealed all of the way to the U.S. Supreme Court where it was upheld as being constitutional (Larocca and Klemanski 2011).

Also as a result of HAVA, polling places are required to have at least one voting machine accessible to voters with disabilities and needed to try getting more electronic voting systems instead of the often confusing punch card or lever machines that have been used by many locations in the past. States were also required to make their voter registration databases electronic and regularly maintain their lists by purging ineligible voters. First time voters are also now required to show identification when casting their first ballot. They are able to show identification without photos, such as a utility bill with a matching address to what is on the registration roll or a birth certificate. Voters who are not on the registration lists but believe they are properly registered are permitted to vote via provisional ballot that is then certified by state officials. In 2004 there were approximately 1.9 million provisional ballots cast and 1.2 million (64.5%) were subsequently counted (Weiser 2006).

Many media outlets published personal stories of individuals that experienced less than ideal voting conditions in recent elections. Long lines seemed to be a major problem of the 2004 presidential election. One news story reported a student waited in line from 1:30 pm till 11:00 pm when she was finally able to cast her vote.

“Ground zero for long waits was Gambier, Ohio, where two electronic voting machines served 1,170 voters. The polling place had to stay open until 4 a.m. to accommodate everyone. Rita Yarman, deputy elections director in Knox County, which includes Gambier, says early voting would have helped. "I think it would be wonderful," she says. "We're certainly hopeful that that comes about." So is Maggie Hill, 21, a student from Maryland who registered to vote at her Kenyon College address in Gambier because her vote for John Kerry mattered more in Ohio. She got in line to vote at 1:30 p.m. and finally got to cast a ballot at 11. "I think I would consider doing the early voting" next time, she says. "There were just too many people"” (Drinkard 2004).

During the 2012 general election there was another account of a voter having to wait a long time, although this was for an early voting line that required 8 hours of waiting before being able to cast a ballot (Peters 2013). There is another report that stated voters at a precinct in Miami-Dade County in Florida were turned away from early voting because too many people showed up wanting to cast a ballot, and the precinct could not handle that many people. These voters were required to come back on Election Day if they wished for their vote to be counted.

“The elections office in Miami-Dade County has reopened after shutting its doors to voters who waited in long lines for an absentee ballot. Deputy Supervisor Christina White says election officials were overwhelmed by the crowd Sunday. With limited staff and one printer, election officials decided to shut down the main office. Voters banged on the front doors and demanded to vote, prompting staff to reopen the office about an hour later. White says, "We heard them loud and clear"” (Associated Press 2012).

In September of 2005 the Commission on Federal Elections released a report that was tasked with finding problems from both the 2000 and 2004 elections, and subsequently give recommendations for fixing those issues. Former President Jimmy Carter formed the commission with members from both parties hoping their recommendations would lessen the burden of voting some citizens experience. The report they released was titled “Building Confidence in U.S. Elections,” and it found the 2000

election had problems with “flawed voter registration lists, obsolete voting machines, poorly designed ballots, and inadequate procedures for interpreting disputed votes” (pg1). The recommendations were based on where they felt HAVA was falling short and where it was truly helping voters. This report opened local officials eyes, by clearly indicating that changes were needed in how elections were administered. Even after passing HAVA, elections only seemed to marginally improve in some areas, but the larger problem remained. Many polling locations across the country were able to shorten wait times because of new electronic voting machines and their ability to make reading the ballot easier (EAC pg3). Simultaneously, the first presidential election after HAVA was passed was in 2004, and it brought to light other issues that were not addressed in the legislation. These problems included voter registrations not being processed in time, absentee ballots not being mailed out in time, long lines at some polling places, improper requests for identification, concerns about partisan registration purges of registration lists, and different procedures across states for counting provisional ballots (EAC pg3).

Voting in elections is one of the ways people can decide what they want for the future of the United States. This civic responsibility has become easier for some than it has for others. Even when some citizens want to vote, they are unable to because they are often met with either voting or registration restrictions passed in their state. Voting restrictions can be present in many election laws. One example of a voting restriction is requiring a government issued photo identification to vote. A driver’s license/identification card or military id would also work, but it has to have a picture and an expiration date (as well as address that matches registration rolls). States have been offering the non-driver’s license identification cards for free but it does still require the

citizen to go to a Bureau of Motor Vehicles office to obtain one. A second voting restriction is taking away the right for felons to vote. Tolbert et. al. (2008) found that by giving felons full voting rights turnout goes up by 3.6 percent. Each state decides on their own if and when felons can vote. It can range from never losing the right to vote (Maine and Vermont) to having to apply to have voting rights restored (Florida, Iowa, etc).

The Alabama NAACP has brought suit against the state of Alabama because they see the new voter identification law discriminating against African-American and Latinos in the state. The NAACP's claim is that the passage of this law disenfranchises African-American and Latino's to try and fix the voter fraud problem the proponents of this law see happening in elections. Also involved in the lawsuit is the fact the state closed 31 DMV locations that had populations that are heavily minority. With the DMV offices closing, the citizens of these counties are required to travel to another county to get a proper identification card to vote often requiring more time and cost than they are able to afford (Roth 2015).

A similar set of arguments was set forth when the U.S. Justice department challenged a voter identification passed in Texas. The state of Texas argued that the law will "guard against voter fraud and protect public confidence in elections." Civil rights groups and the Justice Department feel the law is passed with the intent to suppress certain types of voters (Barnes 2014). With an increase in the number states passing voting laws, there is a need for more research on the effects these laws are having on electoral participation.

Just as Alabama and Texas have had recent laws passed requiring voter identification, North Carolina has had to deal with voter identification controversy. In 2013, the state legislature passed their bill requiring all voters to provide photo identification in order to cast a ballot. Their photo identification law meant that an eighty-six year old woman who newly moved to North Carolina from New Hampshire was not issued an identification card at first because all of her documents did not match because some had her married name and that did not match her birth certificate. In North Carolina, a ninety-four year old woman who had been voting for seventy years and was a civil-rights pioneer was required to make eleven trips to state agencies just to comply with the new law and be able to vote (Berman 2016).

There is considerable popular concern regarding the effects these laws are having, with citizens and politicians both offering up their own claims and theories. However, these typically lack systematic research or comprehensive data to corroborate their assumptions. It is important to figure out if a link does exist between the most restrictive voting laws and turnout among minority groups. If minority groups do in fact have lower turnout in states with the most restrictive voting and registration laws, there will need to be a real discussion of alternative methods of election reform that ensure this representative democracy will continue to be representative of all groups of citizens. With the statistical data that is gained in this report it will be a first step to finding the best election reforms to get a high turnout that is among the highest in developed countries.

The United States often claims to be a model democracy for other countries around the world when it comes to voting. Having citizens wait in long lines, require

government issued photo identification, or require them to jump through many hoops to only register to vote sets a troubling example. Figuring out if this is the case will require an in depth look into election reforms and discover if they are the true culprit behind any inequality of turnout that may exist. The analysis of this thesis will specifically use interaction variables as the way to drill down and see specific groups affected by election reforms. This was the most effective way to see all of the factors affecting a citizen's ability to turnout and vote.

Modern day election reforms started in the early 1970s in Maine, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin by enacting Election Day registration (Ansolabehere and Konisky 2006). Maine's adoption of Election Day registration was met with little resistance in a bipartisan measure passed in 1973. The legislators in office at the time only saw it as "part of a routine revamping of the state's election laws" (Adams 2011). Ohio (in 1977) and Oregon (in 1975) repealed their Election Day registration laws (Ansolabehere and Konisky 2006). Ohio voters repealed their law just months after the legislature passed it (Initiative & Referendum Institute 2014). In 1993 the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) was passed to make it easier for voters to register by adding the ability to register at driver's license bureaus, public assistance agencies, and mail-in registration. Idaho, New Hampshire, and Wyoming adopted Election Day registration "to avoid having to implement the National Voter Registration Act" (Ansolabehere and Konisky 2006) in time for the 1994 election.

Before the 2000 presidential election, Oregon found it more beneficial to execute an all-mail-in election, beginning in 1998. Congress wanted to build on the NVRA and in 2002 passed the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA). This act was intended to

improve state election administration. It specifically spelled out rules that states would be required to implement. The first of these is that it mandated within-state uniformity on balloting systems and second that all new voters in states would need to show identification. Indiana was the first state to take the HAVA voter identification requirement a step further and required identification of all voters. This law was challenged and was appealed all of the way to the U.S. Supreme Court where it was upheld as being constitutional (Larocca and Klemanski 2011). In 2011, the state of Washington followed Oregon's lead and instituted an all-mail voting system, and in 2013, Colorado decided to try the same thing. Scholars have yet to fully examine the effect that these changes have had on participation due to how recently they have been implemented.

After the 2012 presidential election, President Barack Obama signed an executive order to create a commission to study the problems voters face during elections and also give recommendations to help make administering elections more efficient. The 2012 commission had a similar task as the commission set forth by former President Jimmy Carter in 2005. This 2012 commission gave their final recommendations to President Obama on January 22, 2014. The commission's primary findings were that elections were problematic because of a lack of resources, outdated voting technology, and long lines. The overall biggest problem was voters having to stand in long lines to cast their ballots on Election Day. Depending on the election location the long lines could be caused by poll worker mismanagement limited or misallocated resources, and long ballots.

In addition to the commission created by President Obama, there have been independent organizations working to understand specific electoral problems. One such group is the Brennan Center for Justice. The Brennan Center for Justice at New York University Law School is a non-partisan public policy and law institute that focuses on the fundamental issues of democracy and justice. Famighetti, Meillo, and Perez's (2014) report for the Brennan Center researched why some voters were experiencing long lines on Election Day and to what extent those long lines are affecting the voters. The report found that the long lines during the 2012 election were seen more often when minority groups were present. They found that in the three states that were studied, (Florida, Maryland, and South Carolina) "race had a statistically significant relationship with line length and resource allocation" (pg.20).

The issues of the 2000 election were caused by clerical and technology problems that some saw as minor problems; but nevertheless there was a national movement towards reforming the electoral process as a whole (Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, Miller 2008). These five problems are only the tip of the iceberg when looking at the deficiencies in the election process. They are evidence that there are much bigger problems that need further examination also. With election turnout far below the ideal level of 100% there needs to be research into factors that are prohibiting voters from participating.

Election Law/Requirements

Throughout United States election history it is understandable that election laws have evolved over time. With growing number of people being a part of the electorate as well as evolving voting technology new and different election laws and requirements will

be needed. As these laws change it is important to take some time to discuss how the laws differ from state to state.

Voter Registration

There are four requirements a citizen must meet in all states before they are eligible to register to vote. First, the voter must be a citizen of the United States and a legal resident of the state and county in which they are seeking to cast a ballot. Second, citizens must be at least eighteen years of age when voting or seventeen and a half when registering. The third requirement is the voter cannot be serving a sentence for a felony conviction. The fourth and final general requirement is that the voter is not declared mentally incompetent (Hardaway 2008). These are not all of the requirements that a voter has to fulfill to be registered to vote. There are state laws that can differ that need to be satisfied as well.

After these initial requirements, states are able to pass additional conditions as long as they do not alter the above requirements. One of these most common additional requirements states decide on is if the voter needs to be registered before Election Day or if they are able to register on Election Day and still vote the same day. States often have a cutoff date (typically around 30 days prior to Election Day) by which the citizen must have their form turned in to be eligible to vote in the next election.

The registering process is not the same across all states and can provide some confusion and problems. There has been evidence that individuals, who have had fewer opportunities in prior years to register, are the ones most likely to take advantage of registering on Election Day or closer to Election Day (Highton 2004 pg. 509). For

example, take two individuals that are alike in every way except that one is 20 years old and one is 60 years old. For the upcoming presidential election, the 20-year-old will be eligible to vote for the first time, and as a result, the he or she will have had only one opportunity to register, whereas the 60-year-old will have had decades of opportunity to do so. In addition, the 20-year-old will also be more likely to register closer to the election when media coverage is greater and registration drives are happening more frequently. Closing the registration window further out from Election Day may mean the difference between registering or not for young people. In contrast, the 60-year-old will have already had numerous times to register in his or her life up to this point, and the impact of closing registering further from Election Day will matter less. Thus, earlier closing dates have a larger effect on newly eligible voters (Highton 2004).

Research on Election Day registration has found strong evidence supporting the claim that it helps increase turnout. For example, Tolbert et al. (2008) found an increase of 4.5 percent in states with same day registration, while Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) predicted that turnout will increase 9 percentage points if Election Day registration is allowed. Briens and Grofman (2001) had three central findings in their article when they studied Election Day registration. These three findings are average turnout increased by about four percentage points where Election Day registration was adopted, there is a weaker relationship between reduced closing dates and greater turnout once effects of Election Day registration are specified, and finally that the middle class reaps the greatest turnout benefits from Election Day registration. Finally, Ansolabehere and Konisky (2006) found that a state requiring registration before an election does lower turnout among citizens.

The introduction of “motor voter” laws has also been shown to help turnout (Highton 2004). Most citizens need to go to a motor vehicle agency for a driver’s license, renew car registration, or get an identification card. Being able to register to vote at a place where most individuals are required to visit already has made the personal non-monetary cost of registering decrease enough that registering is not seen as a big problem (Wolfinger and Hoffman 2001). Some agencies are required to ask everybody that visits their Bureau or Department of Motor Vehicles if they are registered or would like to register to vote. This is a more active way of registering voters and has seen the best results in increasing voter registration (Highton and Wolfinger 1998). A more passive approach allows citizens to register to vote and have registration forms available at BMVs, but do not ask each person that comes into the agency. This more passive way of using “motor voter” laws did not individually have effects that were distinguishable from zero (Highton 2004).

Voter Photo Identification

The central issue to the research question discussed in this thesis is the burden that obtaining and using photo identification puts on voters during elections. Laws requesting or requiring identification of any kind have been in effect within the United States beginning in the 1950s. South Carolina was first by requesting that voters show any kind of identification but a photo was not required. Between 1970 and 1980 Hawaii, Texas, Florida, and Alaska joined South Carolina wanting their voters to show identification. Georgia joined Indiana as the “first states to require photo identification and required anybody that did not have proper identification to vote on a provisional ballot and return

to an election office within a few days with the proper identification for the vote to count” (NCSL 2015).

As discussed briefly before, these laws were then taken to court on the grounds that they were unconstitutional. In 2008 the U.S. Supreme Court took up the case of Indiana’s voter identification law and found it to be constitutional, which allowed it to go forward and be implemented for the 2008 election. William Crawford, a Democratic member of the Indiana House of Representatives, is the lead plaintiff in the case while the election board of Marion County where Indianapolis is located is the defendant. The Court’s opinion appeared to rest on the lack of evidence supporting the claim that these laws disproportionately burden certain segments of our society (Crawford v. Marion County 2007). The lawyer that represented the plaintiff, William Crawford, failed to bring even one witness from the state of Indiana to testify that this law put an undue stress on their ability to vote. There were many around the country that saw this lack of a witness as a fatal flaw that ensured the Supreme Court would side with the state of Indiana and rule the voter identification law to be constitutional. Following this decision, a number of states adopted similar identification laws to Georgia and Indiana.

Additionally, there is research behind the challenges a Voter-ID law may impose on voters. As of October 2014, 31 states require voters to present an identification card when casting a ballot. The other 19 states only require a signature that is then checked against the signature on file (Underhill 2014). An assumption by voter identification proponents is that most people will go to a motor vehicle agency for any number of reasons and can also get a photo identification card, but this is not always the case. These laws can place a significant burden on low-income individuals (Hersey 2009). These

lower socio-economic status citizens are more likely to not drive, not have the time to go to a motor vehicle agency because of work, not have the required documentation to obtain an identification card, and live in an area that the DMV is being shut down and consolidated with other areas requiring citizens to travel much further distances to get proper identification. This was most notably happening in Alabama where 34 DMV locations were being closed and opponents felt they were specifically targeted because they were in the lowest socio-economic areas and therefore would have the greatest difficulty traveling to the new location (Marsh 2015).

Using the 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Study, Stephen Ansolabehere was able to look at questions that asked respondents to self-identify if they were ever turned away from voting because of not having proper identification. He was able to determine that the problem of non-voting because of photo identification is very rare. This survey was a collaborative project among 37 universities and yielded a national sample of 36,500. The survey “included a battery of questions to gauge Election Day practices; a handful of questions probed the use of voter identifications” (Ansolabehere 2007).

Mycoff, Wagner, and Wilson (2009) looked at both aggregate and individual level data while utilizing the 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Study. They wanted to examine how the strictness of the state’s voter identification affects individual turnout. For looking at the strictness of voter identification laws, the authors utilized a six-point scale, but also used a dummy variable where one equals a photo identification card is required and zero where no photo identification is required (pg. 122). They concluded

that “state voter identification requirement laws have no significant effect on state-level turnout” (pg. 123).

The problem that past research has is that it focuses on aggregate level turnout. This can cause it to miss significant variance in smaller segments of the population, such as Latinos, Asian-Americans, and the poor (Alvarez, Bailey, and Katz 2008; Vercellotti and Anderson 2006). Alvarez, Bailey, and Katz found it beneficial to use the same data and theoretical framework as Vercellotti and Anderson. They both used the Census CPS Voter Supplemental data; but Alvarez, Bailey, and Katz decided to look at the data between 2000 and 2006. By only looking at one year at a time, Alvarez, Bailey, and Katz felt that Vercellotti and Anderson were not able “to correctly estimate the causal effect of voter identification requirements by utilizing the differences between states that changed their requirements and those that did not” (Alvarez, Bailey, Katz 2008).

Given the wide range of election laws across the states, in particular voter identification laws which range from requiring no identification in 17 states to full government-issue photo ID in 18 states; one can think of this as a spectrum that places the most restrictive states like Indiana on one end to states that require nothing like California on the other. A state can choose to not require or request any identification when voting, making it the least restrictive identification law utilized. The most restrictive identification laws are in Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, North Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, Texas, and Wisconsin. The least restrictive identification laws are in Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Kentucky, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, and Utah. These lists do not include the states that have an all-mail election. For example a voter that is registered by the registration deadline will be

able to go to their polling place on the day of the election and cast a ballot without needing to show either a driver's license or a utility bill. Since there is nothing a voter needs to do additionally on Election Day it is the least restrictive voter identification law.

The other end of the spectrum is when a state requires photo identification of all voters and does not allow a ballot cast unless they show proper photo identification from a government entity. There are also instances where a state could choose to require identification but not photo identification. This lies in the middle of the spectrum since it is a bit more restrictive than not requiring identification but not as restrictive as requesting photo identification and making the voter sign an affidavit if they do not possess the proper form. By looking at each state and their individual voter identification laws, it will become apparent if minorities are disproportionately affected, as they are not able to attain the proper identification required by law.

Chapter 2

Methods of Voting

Early in-person voting is done by the voter ahead of the actual Election Day, but still requires the citizen go to a local election office or satellite locations if the state offers it (Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, and Miller 2008). Early voting began in Texas in 1963, but did not take its current form right away nor was it called early voting; instead opting for absentee voting. In 1963, a singular temporary voting center was utilized in the counties where the county seat was not in the largest town in the county. Any voter at this time was also required to have a valid reason why they could not vote on Election Day and needs to vote early. From there, in 1987 a Texas legislator introduced legislation abolishing requiring a reason why the voter needs to cast a ballot early. In 1991, legislation was passed in the Texas legislator making changes that resemble more of the current early voting laws. First, this legislation changed the name from absentee voting to early voting. A second change was the local election official's ability to set up numerous temporary voting stations in non-governmental places that are allowed to have shorter hours than normal Election Day times (Haag).

The most restrictive of early voting laws are when the state only allows in-person early voting a two weeks or less before the election; just as Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Washington DC. California, Nebraska, and Vermont have some of the least restrictive early voting laws; allowing early voting more than four weeks out from Election Day. On the opposite side is Oklahoma who has one of the most restrictive early voting laws. Their early voting is only available the Friday, Saturday, and Monday before

Election Day. Table 1 gives a complete list of each states election laws as of compiling the dataset for this thesis.

Table 1. Election Reform Laws by State

State	Early Voting Law	Voter ID Law	State	Early Voting Law	Voter ID Law
Alabama	No early voting	Photo ID	Arkansas	2 to 4 weeks	
Alaska	2 to 4 weeks	Non-photo ID	California	More than 4 weeks	No ID
Arizona	2 to 4 weeks	Non Photo ID	Colorado	2 to 4 weeks	Non-photo ID
Connecticut	No early voting	No ID	Nebraska	More than 4 weeks	No ID
Delaware	No early voting	Non-photo ID	Mississippi	No early voting	Photo ID
Florida	Less than 2 weeks	Photo ID	North Carolina	Less than 2 weeks	?
Georgia	2 to 4 weeks	Photo ID	North Dakota	No early voting	Non-photo ID
Hawaii	Less than 2 weeks	Photo ID	Ohio	2 to 4 weeks	Non-photo ID
Idaho	No early voting	Photo ID	Oklahoma	Less than 2 weeks	Photo ID
Illinois	Less than 2 weeks	No ID	Oregon	All mail system	No ID
Indiana	No early voting	Photo ID	Pennsylvania	No early voting	No ID
Iowa	No early voting	No ID	Rhode Island	No early voting	Photo ID

Kansas	2 to 4 weeks	Photo ID	South Carolina	No early voting	Photo ID
Kentucky	No early voting	Non-photo ID	South Dakota	No early voting	Photo ID
Louisiana	Less than 2 weeks	Photo ID	Tennessee	2 to 4 weeks	Photo ID
Maine	No early voting	No ID	Texas	Less than 2 weeks	Photo ID
Maryland	Less than 2 weeks	No ID	Utah	Less than 2 weeks	Non-photo ID
Massachusetts	No early voting	No ID	Vermont	More than 4 weeks	No ID
Michigan	No early voting	Photo ID	Virginia	No early voting	Photo ID
Minnesota	No early voting	No ID	Washington	All mail ballot	All mail ballot
Mississippi	No early voting	Photo ID	Washington DC	Less than 2 weeks	Non-photo ID
Missouri	No early voting	Non-photo ID	West Virginia	Less than 2 weeks	No ID
Montana	No early voting	Non-photo ID	Wisconsin	Less than 2 weeks	?
Nebraska	More than 4 weeks	No ID	Wyoming	No early voting	No ID
Mississippi	No early voting	Photo ID			
Missouri	No early voting	Non-photo ID			
Montana	No early voting	Non-photo ID			

Source: State boards of election, National Conference of State Legislatures, Early Voting Information Center at Reed College

Methods of Voting Statistics

Throughout all of the elections and years of study it has been difficult to get accurate numbers on how many voters are using which methods. Using one data source as opposed to another means the findings of the research could be completely different and not match any other findings. This often causes confusion and conflicting results that can be hard to figure out where they fit in the larger body of election research. Research by Alvarez, Levin, and Sinclair in 2012 found that a total of 64% of respondents to the 2008 Survey of the Performance of American Elections cast their ballot on Election Day, making it the most used form of voting. Following Election Day voting, 18 percent of respondents reported they voted early in person and another 18 percent voted absentee by mail. This survey provided a “comprehensive national assessment of voter experiences with electoral process” and was composed of surveys from 200 respondents in each of the 50 states. Being able to get actual data on how many voters use each method has not been easy throughout the years (Alvarez, Levin, Sinclair 2012). While Alvarez, Levin, and Sinclair conducted their research, they looked at different approaches and all of the different methods that were used. Some of the early studies used county-level election and census data to look at which demographic variables of voters were tied to use of certain methods of voting. With surveys, researchers are able to avoid inference problems from trying to explain individual tendencies from aggregate data (Alvarez, Levin, Sinclair 2012). Researchers have not been able to get complete accurate data from states on how many voters use different methods of voting because often then states will not keep track themselves or they will lump categories together and not make distinctions

among them. An example of this would be counting all absentee votes and votes cast early at a polling location all as absentee votes and not distinguishing the difference. In place of having actual numbers, researchers have had to use proxy measurements, and that is why national surveys are often the next best option.

However, in four states, more than 50 percent of voters said that they used the vote by mail option: Oregon (97 percent), Washington (86 percent), Colorado (61 percent), and Arizona (54 percent). In another 10 states, more than 20 percent of all ballots were cast by mail. Finally, five states had voters report that more than 50 percent voted in person before the election: Tennessee (63 percent), Texas (62 percent), Nevada (62 percent), North Carolina (53 percent), and New Mexico (52 percent). For their analysis, Alvarez, Levin and Sinclair (2012) used data from the 2008 Survey of the Performance of American Elections.

Of the people who do use in-person early voting, research finds that partisans are significantly more likely to utilize this option (Stein 1998, Stein & Garcia-Monet 1997). Voters that utilized the early voting options were better informed and were more engaged in a campaign (Gronke and Toffey 2008). Early voting for these partisans gives them the opportunity to work on the campaigns and get out the vote of other citizens on Election Day (Gronke and Toffey 2008). In addition, individuals that have a high interest in politics and strong ideological alignments are most likely to vote early-but they are also the voters that will show up in general to vote on Election Day (Giammo and Brox 2010). Alvarez, Levin, and Sinclair (2012) found that the voter with the highest probability of utilizing the early vote mode is greatest among liberal, well-educated, older, male, and strong partisan voters. The older voters are already at a higher risk of participation and

often have the time to go and vote early to avoid any lines on Election Day. Strong partisans as well are already the most likely to participate so they would have increased incentive to early vote and maybe volunteer for their preferred candidate on Election Day. For a voter that is well educated they would have the ability to learn any new technology or will do the research to figure out how elections are administered in their state.

Tolbert et. al (2008) examined eight different types of voting reforms in order to determine their effect on turnout. These eight types were mail voting, photo identification requirements, Election Day holidays, restrictions on felons voting, statewide computer registration database, in-person early voting, Election Day registration, and no-excuse absentee voting. Of these types of voting, increases in turnout were seen only in felon voting, and Election Day registration showed significant signs that they truly increased voter turnout over time. When keeping other variables constant, the felon voting law reforms produced a 1.8 percentage-point increase in turnout in states with only modest felon voting laws; and a 3.6 percentage-point increase when felons are given full voting rights (Tolbert et. al 2008). Looking at these numbers puts forth the idea that election reforms alone are not enough to increase turnout. There must also be structural changes in elections to improve competitiveness and give voters a reason to be involved and want to turn out to vote. Often looking at just changes in turnout in relation to determine the effectiveness of election reforms will not be enough to find causation. There always needs to be consideration of the political climate to ensure it is the election reform that is causing the turnout change.

Some research has shown that no-excuse absentee voting does not always translate to greater turnout and is instead only a convenience for the voters who face longer commute times when voting in person (Giammo and Brox 2010, Gronke 2008). Numerous studies have also shown that early voting does not increase the voter's likelihood of turning out across the board (Gronke 2008). Similarly, research by Giammo and Brox (2010) showed that any increase in voting is not long lasting and has a bit of a novelty feel when first introduced and that feeling will recede after the election. One study does show that the voting by mail method is the one type of convenience voting that has a positive impact on voter turnout (Gronke 2007). For some election administrators and politicians it does not matter who is early voting as long as the goal of increasing turnout is met. The other side may think that even if turnout is increased slightly, the benefit is not worth the extra cost incurred by the state. The more people that utilize early voting the fewer issues may appear on Election Day. Early voting can reduce the internal cost of voters on Election Day voting by cutting down on the long lines (Giammo and Brox 2010).

Minority Electoral Participation and Voting Regulations

Increasing turnout among all groups should be the goal of election reforms, but legislators need to make sure that the turnout is not being swayed in favor of the groups already turning out in the greatest number. With groups such as older individuals, whites, and more wealthy citizens, already making up a large percentage of the electorate, it is important to make sure election reforms are increasing the level of minority turnout to similar levels of other groups. Rigby and Springer (2011) look at variance in the demographic makeup of the electorate. They found that there is a predicted decrease in

the proportion of voters turning out among the poor after a state implements in-person early voting. This can possibly be explained by different mobilization efforts in states with early voting (Rigby and Springer 2011). There are some states that have an over representation of certain groups of people on the registration rolls while others have an under representation of some groups. This over or under representation of people means voter registration rolls have a preexisting bias toward different groups. Any of the inequality effects to registration are associated with preexisting bias in the state voter registration rolls when the electoral reforms are adopted (Rigby and Springer 2011). For example if the state's registration rolls has an equal amount of rich and poor citizens the registration reform enacted will have no effect. On the other hand, if the state has registration rolls that are skewed to one group the registration reform will have a more equalizing impact. In the case of having more rich voters registered than poor voters, a registration reform in a state with skewed rolls will mean the number of each group registered will be closer (Rigby and Springer 2011).

This effect of the bias has an even more significant impact in those states that have more stratified registration rolls (Rigby and Springer 2011). Conversely, other work has shown that all voting reforms across the board exacerbate the socio economic biases in the election system (Berinsky 2005, Berinsky et.al 2001, Hershey 2009). If the voter was already planning to vote then having the ballot sent to them and having more than just Election Day to fill it out means they will be more apt cast a ballot (Berinsky et. al 2001).

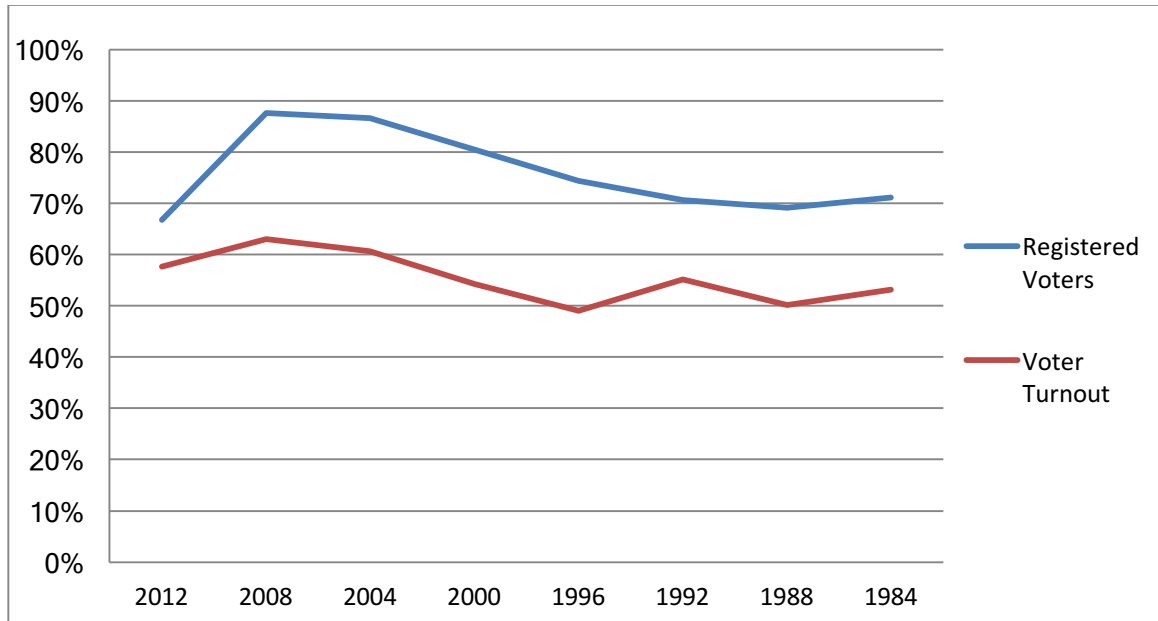
Whereas research has shown that some election reforms help increase the inequality in some reforms it is not the only answer research has found. There has been

research that found the largest decrease in voting inequality has been observed when implementing Election Day registration in the states that already have a high registration bias (Rigby and Springer 2011). Motor voter laws do not produce as large a decrease in inequality as Election Day registration; but it is the only election reform that Rigby and Springer found that did decrease inequality (Rigby and Springer 2011). Election Day registration also did not show any improvement in equality among educational levels (Knack and White 2000). There is so much conflicting research that it is hard to know what really is happening. Findings can depend on anything from what years are being studied, is it looking at voters in the aggregate as opposed to voters on the individual level, or is it looking at only a few states as opposed to all states together. These different rates of participation across different research sets up this thesis and future research to look at how each reform affects turnout as well as the equality of the groups that are turning out across the country.

Graph 1 provides statistics on the total registered voters and voter turnout of all ethnicities. Graph 2 provides statistics on the reported voting turnout of different ethnicities. Finally, graph 3 provides statistics on the reported registered voters of different ethnicities.

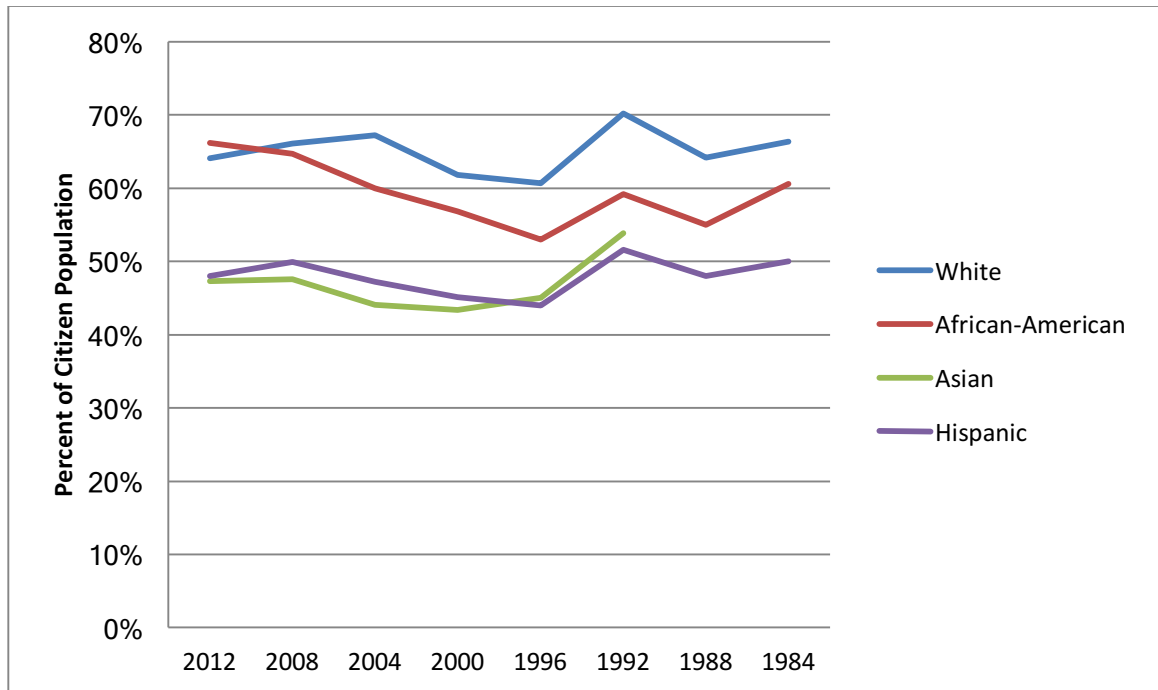
Minority Groups Registration and Voting

Graph 1. Total Registered Voters and Voter Turnout



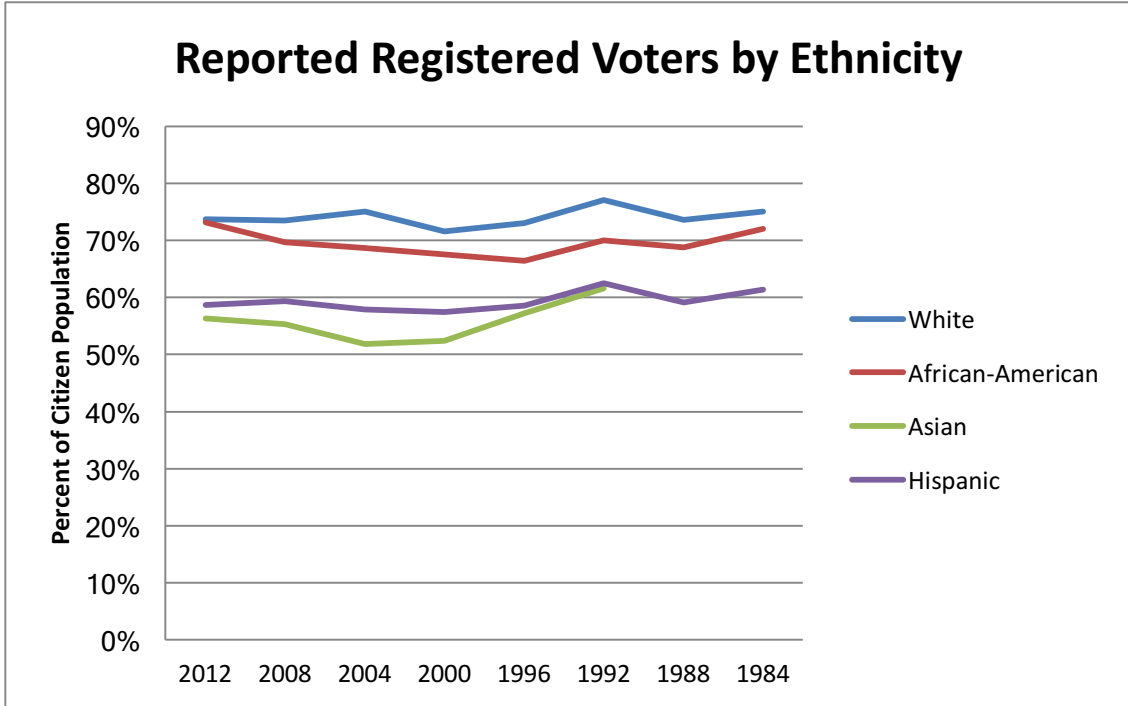
Source: Associated Press Election Research Group, George Mason University

Graph 2. Reported Voting by Ethnicity



Source: U.S Census Current Population Survey

Graph 3. Reported Registered Voters by Ethnicity



Source: U.S. Census Current Population Survey

As shown in the table above members of minority groups do not turnout to vote as much. It is important to try and get traditionally low participating groups to the polls where one can have the greatest impact. Previous research has been mixed on how election reforms affect minority populations and because of these conflicting results it is important to revisit and try and discover if new data helps to flesh out a more concise answer.

Chapter 3

Data and Methods

In order to test the two hypotheses, I have collected state-level data from multiple sources between 2006 and 2014 and combined them into one dataset. The years 2006 to 2014 were chosen because they provided the most reliable and complete data.

Unfortunately, some variables were not readily obtainable for years prior to 2006 for every state. While it would have been great to get data for many more years, it does not seem that it would be necessary. Mostly, these extra years do not contain enough changes in voting laws for it to be worthwhile to analyze with the later years. The changes in voting laws really started being passed at an accelerated pace around 2010. Twenty-one states have passed some form of voting restriction legislation since 2010. With these changes happening over time, and not just in one specific year, the data is better able to show the long-term effects of any election changes.

The dependent variable in the analysis is the voter turnout in each state in each year. The turnout variable is titled Voter Eligible Population Turnout, and it represents an estimate of a person's eligibility to vote regardless of voter registration status in an election. Voting Eligible Population (VEP) is the most accurate and widely used form of turnout statistics, and for this data set, it was gathered from the United States Elections Project website which is run by Michael McDonald (McDonald, State Turnout Rates).

VEP has become the most used turnout measure for state-level analysis. Previous research used voting age population (Burnham 1982, 1985, 1987; Nie and Verba 1972; Piven and Cloward 1989, 2000; Rosenstone and Hanson 1993; Teixeira 1987; Mitchell and Wlezien 1995; and Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980), but that was primarily due to

scholars not being able to find other options (Holbrook and Heidbreder 2010). Using voting eligible population removes the ineligible citizens that are counted when looking at voting age population. The citizens that are immigrants or felons that are not able to vote are not included in VEP turnout percentages. The alternative option is to use voting age population, but this measurement includes all citizens whether or not they are actually allowed to vote. For some states, the population of immigrants and felons can be very high and will in turn make the voting age population turnout statistic not accurate. As a result, McDonald's voting eligible population turnout statistics were used for this analysis.

The primary independent variable for testing my hypotheses is one measuring the restrictiveness of states voter identification laws. I specifically focus on the requirement that voters show photo identification in order to cast a ballot. This will consist of a three-point scale indicating real differences between each form of requiring photo identification and coded as 0 for no id required, 1 for any identification requested or required (no photo needed) including utility bills, and 2 for photo identification requested or required.

Using a three-point scale to classify photo identification laws is not the only way this has been measured in past research. In Larocca and Klemanski's (2011) analysis, they classify state's photo identification laws in four groups. These groups were; non-photo identification requested, non-photo identification required, photo identification requested and photo identification required. While it is understandable to want to analyze the non-photo identification variable by if the identification is requested or required, the requirement is not a stark enough difference to warrant making this distinction. To look at the photo identification variable on the three-point scale, it will show the results from

the distinct differences of not having a law at all, voting with non-photo identification, and a photo identification being involved. This also ensures there are enough cases in each category that any results will be more representative.

The major part of this thesis' analysis comes from interaction variables between key control variables. The photo identification variable is used in all of the interactions. The first interaction is between the photo identification laws in the state and the percentage of citizens that are white in the state. This variable has a low point of 22.7% in Hawaii in 2010 and a high point of 95.6% in Vermont in 2006. The second interaction measures the interaction between the photo identification law and the education variable (labeled, less than college). The United States Bureau of Census has kept a wealth of data on citizen's education levels. The analysis of this thesis looked at state's education levels and measured the percentage of the population with less than a completed college degree. Citizens that are poor or part of a minority make up a greater percentage of the people completing less than a college degree. With this in mind, it is important to see how the photo identification law affects these groups specifically. In West Virginia in 2006, 83.5% of the population had completed less than a college degree; making it the least educated state in the data set. Massachusetts in 2014 had 59.7% of its citizens completing less than a college degree; making this the most educated state in the data set. A third interaction analyzed photo identification and state median household income. State median household income numbers ranged from a low of \$37,173 in Mississippi in 2012 to a high of \$78,632 in New Jersey in 2006¹. By using these interaction variables it

¹ The bivariate correlation between education and income is -.756. Because it is above -.7 there is a strong relationship between the education and income variables.

allows this work to pinpoint very specific instances where these variables affect voter turnout, unlike past research that takes a broader view.

After covering some of the key independent variables, it is important to discuss the control variables that were also used in the analysis. For the control variables, data was gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau extensive data sets. The census does a complete count of citizens in the United States every 10 years, and because of this, the numbers for 2010 are exact counts and the other years are estimates based on these years. In this analysis, the first control variable is a measurement for minority speakers. This variable (Non-English Speakers) measures the percentage of citizens in the state that do not speak English as a majority in their home. The percentage of non-English speaking citizens was at its highest at 44.3% in California and at its lowest at 2.2% in West Virginia in multiple years as well.

Often voter turnout can also depend on if there is a presidential or governor's election (Panagopoulos 2011; Fraga and Hersh 2010). With this in mind, I created dummy variables for each type of election. The first was coded one if the state had a gubernatorial race that year and zero otherwise, and the second dummy was coded one if the year was a presidential election year and zero otherwise. This information was obtained from the New York Times website.

To ensure partisanship and unemployment were accurately measuring what they should, steps were taken to normalize these variables. Normalizing a variable is most useful when looking at measurements over the course of many years and trying to make sure nothing else is driving the variance. So for a state's partisanship, it may be

problematic to just use the percent of the vote that the Republican presidential candidate received each election. The issue is that part of what drives that number is how well the individual Republican candidate did that year. In other words, the idiosyncrasies of the individual election will play a part. In order to try and eliminate that, it is a better idea to look at how much more or less a state is Republican during that election, which is likely to be less dependent on the particular candidate or election year. To find this you subtract the overall national vote for the Republican candidate from the statewide vote for the Republican candidate. This will produce a scale that measures the partisanship of a state that is independent of how well any particular Republican presidential candidate did in a given year. Therefore, in the following models, partisanship is a scale that runs from -19.42% to 25.64%, where high numbers indicate a state that is more Republican in partisanship than the national percentage during the Presidential election, and low numbers indicate a state that less Republican in partisanship than the national percentage. The same normalizing was done for the state's unemployment rates. The national unemployment rate was used for the normalizing. The unemployment rate was at its highest in Nevada in 2010 at 13.5%, and was lowest in Hawaii in 2006 at 1.9%. These unemployment rates were found in the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Results

Table 2. Effect of Voter Identification Laws from 2006 to 2014

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Photo Identification Law	.4832063 (.8999926)	2.59025 (4.519866)	117.5527 (73.12816)
Percent with Only a High	-0.155038	-.1481462*	.4826148

School Degree	(.2346879)	(0.0923121)	(1.577595)
State Median Household Income	.0001637 (.0000959)	.0001674* (.0000954)	.0005297 (.0018018)
Governors Election	1.205575 (.7797547)	1.233049 (.8027394)	1.248169 (.7649659)
Presidential Election	19.80164*** (.8288937)	19.81939*** (.844775)	19.87016*** (.7846147)
State Unemployment Percentage	.5184898 (.3748786)	.5217372 (.377856)	.5257602 (.3764883)
Percentage Female	-1.750524* (.8736805)	-1.749862* (.8775022)	-1.258634 (.9591702)
Percentage Non-English Speakers	-0.1623725 (.1080162)	-.1585539 (.1077257)	-.1976442 (.1127701)
State Partisanship	-0.2389816* (.0996675)	-.2383296* (.100824)	-.2348681* (.1015415)
Percent White	.1752128** (.0631778)	.2045322* (.0923121)	.1608245* (.0684857)
Photo Identification Law X White		-.0280824 (.064237)	
Photo Identification Law X Less than college			-1.583606 (.9935905)
Photo Identification Law X State Median Household			-.0016055 (.001184)

Income			
Photo Identification Law X Less than college X State Median Household Income			.0000216 (.0000168)
Constant	122.545* (57.42396)	119.5376* (56.9875)	49.81826 (113.2653)

* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

This study investigates the effects of election laws on individual turnout, specifically looking at voter identification laws. Table 2 presents results after estimating three OLS regressions. Model 1 is the basic model without any interactions. This is presented in order to provide a baseline from which to understand the results of Models 2 and 3. Only the Presidential Election variable was seen as significant at the .001 level in Model 1. When a Presidential Election is present, a state can expect that their voter turnout will increase 19 percentage points. Percentage of the state that is white is significant at the .01 level. As the percentage of the state that is white gets larger, the larger the turnout. Photo Identification Law, Percent with Only a High School Degree, State Median Household Income, Governors Election, State Unemployment Percentage, and Percentage Non-English Speakers variables did not show statistical significance. The percentage of females in the state was significant at the .05 level. The larger the proportion of the state that is female, the smaller the turnout will be. Also, state partisanship was significant at the .05 level. As the state becomes more Republican in their partisanship, the smaller the turnout will be.

Only examining Model 1 would result in the deduction that voter identification laws do not have any effect on voter turnout. Having no interactions in Model 1 makes it a broad view of variables that may affect turnout but therefore it does not explore the exact cross section of variables and types of people where the voter identification laws are having the most effect. I do not expect wealth areas to be effected, but the areas where people have fewer resources will be affected. The model without interactions lumps all areas together, which might hide the effect we expect to be seen in certain areas. If only one variable is examined, it can be easy to think there is no relationship to the dependent variable. If the variable is combined with another, it could show a relationship that could have been completely missed if not looked at further. A three way interaction model in particular is great at really drilling down and seeing what cross section of the variables will show which voters are most affected by requiring photo identification. With using dummy variables it will lump any differentiation in the variable together, but with the interaction it will separate out the differences and show exactly where the problem is. For example, a dummy variable of state median income will lump rich and poor states together, but in the interaction it will separate those states out and show the differences between those two different income groups.

In Model 2, having a presidential election was also significant in increasing turnout at the .001 level. Percentage of the state that is white is significant at the .05 level. As the percentage of the state that is white gets larger, the larger the turnout. The percentage of females in the state was significant at the .05 level. The larger the proportion of the state that is female, the smaller the turnout will be. Also, state partisanship was significant at the .05 level. As the state becomes more Republican in

their partisanship, the smaller the turnout will be. The coefficient of partisanship in Model 2 is $-.2383$. With the coefficient being negative, it means that as the state increases its percentage of citizens with Republican partisanship, their turnout will decrease $.2383$ percent. The variable state partisanship measures how Republican the state is, and the coefficient of this variable within Model 2 means that every one percentage point increase in a state's Republican partisanship will result in a decrease of $.24$ percentage points. Looking at Model 2 in Table 2, the coefficient for the interaction between photo identification and white shows that when the photo identification variable equals zero (not requiring an identification of any kind) and the larger the proportion of whites in the state, the larger the turnout will be. This result is opposite of the effect of the state partisanship. For every one-percentage point increase in the number of whites in a state voter turnout will increase $.20$ percentage points. Photo Identification Law, Percent with Only a High School Degree, State Median Household Income, Governors Election, State Unemployment Percentage, and Percentage Non-English Speakers variables did not show statistical significance

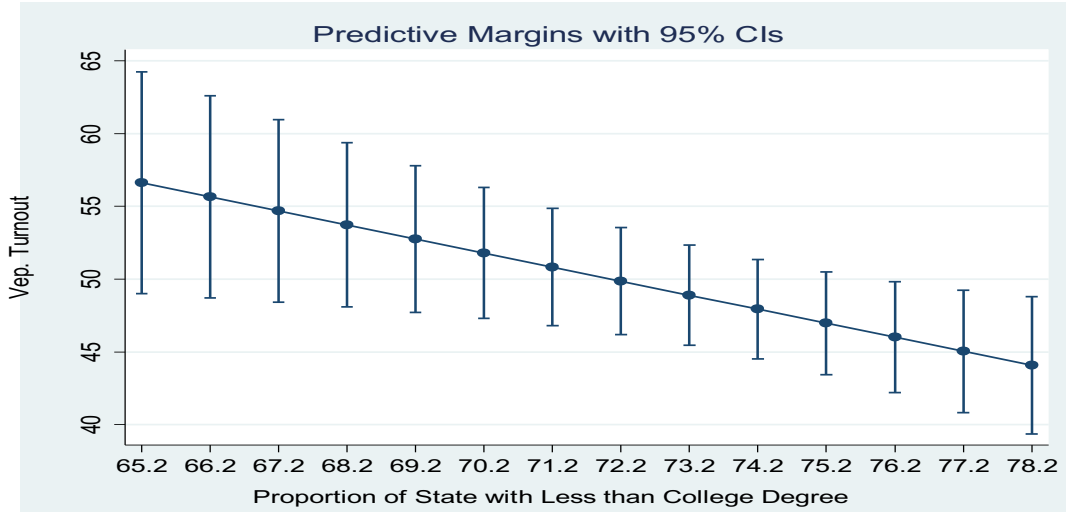
The biggest findings are seen in Model 3. Photo Identification Law, Percent with Only a High School Degree, State Median Household Income, Governors Election, Percent Female, State Unemployment Percentage, and Percentage Non-English Speakers variables did not show statistical significance. On the other hand, state partisanship was significant at the $.05$ level. Just as in Model 1 and Model 2, as the state becomes more Republican in their partisanship, the smaller the turnout will be. Percentage of the state that is white is significant at the $.05$ level. As the percentage of the state that is white increases, the larger the turnout. For this model, a three-way interaction between the voter

identification variable, percent of the state that has less than a college diploma, and the state's median household income was included. A three-way interaction variable helps to pin point the cross-section where a voter will be most affected by voter identification laws. In this case, it was to see what group of people is most affected by requiring photo identification in order to vote.

Interpreting two-way interactions can be challenging in the best circumstances, which makes the three-way interaction in Model 3 nearly impossible to fully understand from coefficients in a table like those found in Table 2. Therefore, I have included two figures that will allow me to isolate states with strict voter identification laws and then look at how turnout changes as either their aggregate education levels or aggregate income levels change. By looking at Figure 1, it is easier to see the three-way interaction is significant. The confidence intervals do not overlap in the figure. By not overlapping, there is a significant difference between the two estimates resulting in a decrease in turnout. When a state has about 65 percent of its people with less than a college degree, their turnout will be about 57 percent. When a state has about 78 percent of its citizens with less than a college degree, their turnout will be about 44 percent. That's a drop of 13 percentage points that is attributable to citizens with a lower education attainment living in a state that requires showing a photo identification to vote. For example, Indiana requires showing a photo identification, which Iowa does not. They both have similar overall educational attainment, with about 75 percent of their populations having a college degree. But because of the voter identification law in Indiana, one would expect Iowa to have about a 13 percent higher turnout rate than Indiana. Figure 2 shows that if the state does not require any identification to vote, there is no discernable statistically

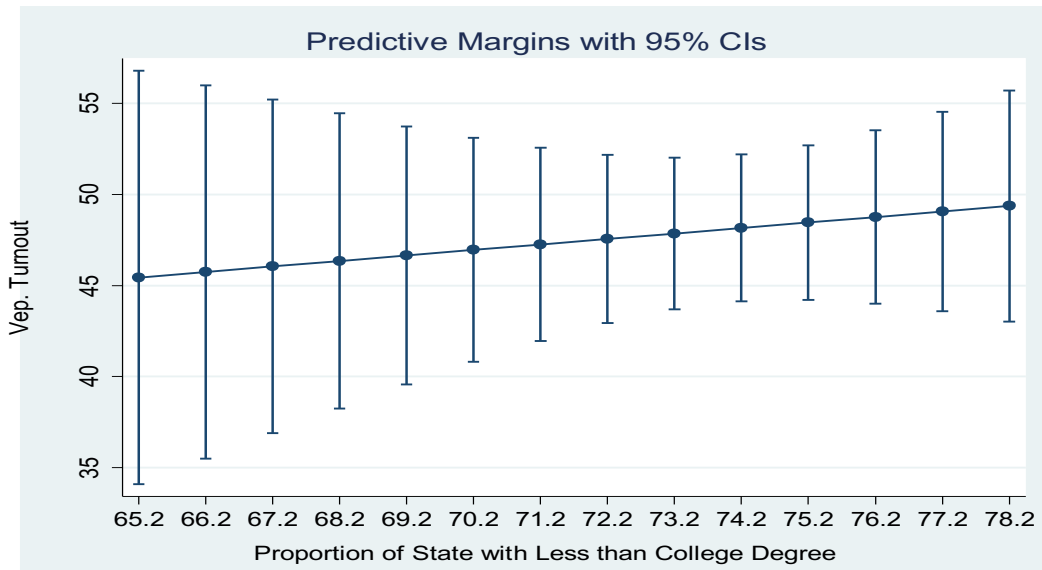
significant difference in turnout between voters with less than a college degree and a post graduate degree no matter the state they live.

Figure 1. Effects on Election Turnout of Strict Voter ID Requirements with Higher Percentage of Lower Educated in the State



Note: State level education from 90th to 10th percentile; Voter ID set to value of 2, and median state income set to \$44000, which is the 10th percentile.

Figure 2. Effects on Election Turnout of No Photo Id Required with Higher Percentage of Lower Educated in the State



Note: State level education from 90th to 10th percentile; Voter ID set to value of 2, and median state income set to \$44000, which is the 10th percentile.

Conclusion and Discussion

I began this thesis discussing all the problems citizens could potentially come into contact with while registering, voting early, or voting on Election Day. The voting reform that has shown to be the toughest barrier for some citizens to overcome is when states require photo identification to vote. Different media sources have done a great job of reporting on the problems voters have encountered, as well as reporting on the tactics and laws that have been passed in hope of fixing the voting system in states across the country. These stories of the different problems included potential voters needing to take significant time to travel to a license branch to obtain a photo identification card or having to wait in lines for hours at the polling places. State legislatures have been trying to make their elections “more fair” but all have a differing opinion on what that means. With all of these differences, it presented an interesting empirical question to be studied further. The potential for these differences to cause groups of voters to be disenfranchised gives great reason to further investigate. States requiring photo identification to vote is the newest of the reforms and therefore had the greatest chance of really affecting turnout rates in some states.

The previous literature pertaining to election reforms affects on voter turnout has had mixed findings. These mixed findings made it good to further the study. For my analysis, I looked at all of the state laws passed from 2006-2014 that pertained to election reforms. In doing this I was able to ensure all of the election reforms were accounted for and coded accordingly. For the demographic variables, the Census datasets were utilized.

This thesis does confirm some of the previous research findings while also shedding light on where the previous research fell short. Hypothesis 1 (saying that in states with strict voter identification laws, the lower a state's aggregate education level, the lower voter turnout will be) was confirmed based on the analysis, while hypothesis 2 (saying that in states with strict voter identification laws, the larger the minority population the lower voter turnout will be) was not affirmed. Because of inconsistent results throughout the years, it can only be determined that this research will not answer the question about election reforms and turnout decisively enough to enact change based on its results, but instead will provide additional another piece of the puzzle and can help to further discussion of requiring photo identification to vote. This theses analysis was able to show that while voter turnout did not decrease in the aggregate due to a state having a strict voter identification laws, it did have an effect on voters in states with the strictest voter identification laws that had the lowest education levels. A state with a larger population of lower educated citizens could expect to see lower turnout if they required voters to have a government issued photo identification to cast a ballot. It is important that there does seem to be an effect on turnout for the lower educated group of voters. Even though most of the literature and popular new stories focus on how voter identification laws affect groups of racial minority voters, I was not able to find any indication of that in my analysis. The effect of requiring photo identification to vote seems instead to be more about the social class the voter is a member of than what race or ethnicity they identify with.

My analysis was hampered a bit based on the lack of data prior to 2004. The internet and online record keeping are becoming almost second nature to state

governments, and therefore finding all of the information needed will make further studies of election reforms less time-consuming and more accurate. By adding more cases, any analysis of election reforms will be strengthened and would allow the effects of new identification laws to settle a bit and see if the turnout of many groups is truly changed because of the law or if it is just an anomaly election year that does not truly explain overall turnout going forward.

It is really hard to say if there would be policy implications based on the results of this thesis. When passing these laws, it seems that political science literature is thrown out of the window in exchange for what the party in power thinks will help them get reelected. There are think tanks and organizations, such as The Brennan Center, which are dedicated to monitoring the effects of election reforms and putting forth recommendations on how to fix these problems. Right now election reforms are a hot button issue in many state governments and the media. It is my hope that this analysis will lend a hand to furthering the conversation on their effectiveness. Election reforms are an every evolving topic and can only be helped by continuous study to ensure there are no consequences that make voting exponentially tougher for specific citizens to exercise their civic duty of voting.

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