



Voting Rights – Short Talking Points

How can a country that prides itself on free and open elections systematically act to disenfranchise voters and make it ever harder for them to exercise this fundamental freedom? In the case of Virginia, the answer lies in a ruthlessly effective campaign led by Republicans to make Virginia one of the hardest states in the country to vote. Why? Because low voter turnout benefits Republican candidates.

Virginia bans early voting and “no excuse” absentee voting—options that are widely available in other states to increase participation, which would hurt the Republicans.

Republican legislators passed a law requiring specific kinds of photo IDs in order to vote—a law that limits access to the polls for a traditional Democratic base. Poor/minority voters often don’t have the required documentation, and low-income citizens can’t take time off work and often don’t have transportation to go in person to the registrar’s office to get a voter photo ID,

Republican turnout is higher than Democrats in off-year elections. Therefore, Republicans support Virginia’s scheduling of state-level elections in non-presidential election years in order to give their party an advantage.

Easy access to neighborhood polling places and longer hours enable working class people to vote without having to travel long distances, miss work, or wait in long lines. Yet in 2012 in Virginia, 30% of voters waited in line 30 or more minutes, and Prince William County (40% black and Hispanic) reported 2-hour wait times, with one precinct reporting that voters waited in line 5 hours after polls closed. The insufficient number of neighborhood polling places and restricted voting hours hit minority and low-income voters the hardest—voters who are predominantly Democrats.

All of these methods and more are active voter suppression methods fully supported by Virginia Republicans. One person, one vote? Don’t think so.