



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on April 26, 2011

New Kansas Law Requires Proof of Citizenship for Voters

Last week, Kansas Governor Sam Brownback (left) signed into law a measure that will require Kansas voters to present photo IDs at the polling booth. According to Brownback, the law is a “modest, prudent measure” that will ensure “the sanctity of the vote.



CNS News [explains](#) of the law: “The new Kansas law requires photo ID from all in-person voters at every election. People submitting mail-in ballots must include either a copy of their photo ID or the number from the photo ID card. The law also requires proof of citizenship — a birth certificate, for example — for new voters who register on or after January 1, 2013.”

The new requirements were proposed in January by Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, who also sought to “give his office the authority to prosecute election fraud, to impose harsher penalties on those convicted of committing election fraud, and to require proof of citizenship in 2012 instead of 2013,” [according to](#) the *Kansas Reporter*. Those requests were rejected, however.

Kobach asserts that there is a possibility that those items may appear in one of the elections bills that lawmakers are considering in conference committees on April 27.

“All of this stuff is still on the table[;] there’s still a fair amount of deliberation in conference committee,” Kobach said, adding that if the measures fail, there are more chances for passage next year.

Despite the seemingly innocuous nature of the law, it has become controversial. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) called the bill “a giant leap backwards.” The group takes issue with the notion that free birth certificates are offered only to Kansas-born residents, creating a financial burden for those born out of state.

“The costs associated with meeting the new law’s requirements are especially burdensome to low-income voters,” said the ACLU.

The ACLU also contends that the new law somehow undermines efforts to expand the right to vote to “historically marginalized groups,” including minorities, low-income voters, disabled voters, and senior citizens. “Theirs is an extremely nearsighted view of just how difficult it will be for remote, marginalized, and under-resourced individuals to obtain a valid photo ID and evidence of citizenship,” the group maintains.

Likewise, the ACLU believes that a photo ID will do little to bar illegal immigrants from voting in the state of Kansas, and declares there to be little evidence of an overabundance of voter fraud.

There is evidence to the contrary, however.



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In 2005, the U.S. Government Accountability Office found that 3 percent of the 30,000 individuals called for jury duty over a two-year period in just one U.S. district court were not U.S. citizens. *The Cutting Edge News* [put](#) that figure into perspective when it explained, “While that may not seem like many, just 3 percent of registered voters would have been more than enough to provide the winning presidential vote margin in Florida in 2000.”

It adds:

Thousands of non-citizens are registered to vote in some states, and tens if not hundreds of thousands in total may be present on the voter rolls nationwide...Yet there is no reliable method to determine the number of non-citizens registered or actually voting because most laws to ensure that only citizens vote are ignored, are inadequate, or are systematically undermined by government officials.

Many state officials have bemoaned the reliance on the “honor system” to keep illegal aliens from voting, including Maryland’s state election administrator, who complained, “There is no way of checking...We have no access to any information about who is in the United States legally or otherwise.”

Overall, the ACLU asserts that the process requires voters to “jump through hoops” and will reduce the already low voting figures because a mere 41 percent of eligible people voted in the 2010 general election.

In response to the ACLU’s complains, Secretary of State Kris Kobach observed that Kansas accomplished a major feat in passing the bill. “No other state in the union does as much to secure the integrity of the voting process,” he added.

After signing the bill into law, Governor Brownback defended the reach of the law, asserting, “You show photo ID to cash a check, you show one to get on a plane[;] it’s something people are used to doing.”

Thirty-two state legislatures are currently considering similar legislation.



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