



## Modest Proposals for Bipartisan Federal Election Reform

Members of Congress are actively focused on so-called “voting rights” reform, which has largely taken the form of broad, partisan bill packages that would supplant the states’ primary role in running elections and simultaneously subvert election integrity. If passed, efforts such as [H.R. 1](#) and [H.R. 4](#) would do little to protect voting rights but would instead radically change our election system in a way that would dramatically undermine voters’ confidence in election results for years to come.

There are, however, areas where federal legislation could be enacted to reform election laws in a way that would be within the realm of normal federal election regulation and inspire public confidence in election results and election systems. The proposals below would be widely supported by the public and should be able to garner bipartisan support on Capitol Hill.

**Voter Registration List Maintenance.** The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA or “Motor Voter”), the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), and the bipartisan Presidential Commission on Election Administration all supported and/or required voter registration list maintenance to ensure state voter lists are accurate and up to date. Yet states often fail to perform adequate voter list maintenance, leading to voter registration rolls that contain significant errors such as deceased voters and voters who have moved out of state. Inaccurate voter lists directly undermine the public’s confidence in the election system. Therefore, federal legislation could be enacted to:

1. Create specific standards for list maintenance for states, promulgated by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC). This should include interstate list maintenance and verification, allowing states to exchange lists with other states to identify potential duplicates from voters who have moved, died, or otherwise lost their voting privileges.
2. Establish federal funding to encourage interstate list maintenance. States that trade lists and de-duplicate entries would receive earmarked funding from the EAC for this effort.
3. Establish detailed and/or updated procedures to ensure that voters are not incorrectly identified as potential duplicates or invalid registrants and wrongfully removed from voter registration lists. This would be similar to the postcard notification system currently required under the NVRA before an inactive voter is removed from a registration list.

**Post Office Regulation.** Given the increased use of voting by mail, the United States Postal Service (USPS) could improve its service in matters related to absentee/mail ballot applications and absentee/mail ballots. Federal legislation could be enacted to:

1. Establish and require a mail ballot tracking system for all mail ballots and to create federal standards for USPS to track ballots at every step of the process.
2. Ensure better compliance with existing standards for the processing of election mail.



3. Enact new standards to ensure expedited processing of all mail ballots, within current USPS operational constraints.

**Poll Worker Support.** Elderly citizens have long been the mainstay in Election Day staffing, but they are increasingly unavailable for a number of reasons, leading to a nationwide shortage of capable poll workers. Federal legislation could be enacted to:

1. Provide training, through the EAC, to leaders in the states on how to recruit poll workers to adequately staff polling locations.
2. Fund payments, again through the EAC, specifically for poll workers on Election Day and especially for larger cities. These payments would fund the recruitment and employment of bipartisan poll workers to ensure that more people would have confidence in the election.

**Modernize Election Machines.** Voting machine manufacturers have faced increased scrutiny in the past few years from voices on both sides of the aisle. It is vital to bolster public confidence in election equipment. The EAC regularly publicizes industry standards for voting machines but funding both for developing and purchasing new, updated equipment is often lacking. Federal legislation could be enacted to:

1. Provide the EAC with funding to provide states with monetary grants to buy new EAC-standard compliant election machines.
2. Provide the EAC with funding to subsidize election machine companies to develop and manufacture equipment that is compliant with new EAC standards.

*Note: These proposals are not fully realized and are only ideas for starting a conversation about realistic, bipartisan federal election reform. Likewise, they do not entertain many other areas where election reform could potentially gain bipartisan support and would improve voter confidence, as LDF believes those matters are best left to the states to determine the appropriate procedures for their citizens' unique needs and situations.*

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