

We Shall Overcome Voter Suppression: More States Are Making It Easier to Vote

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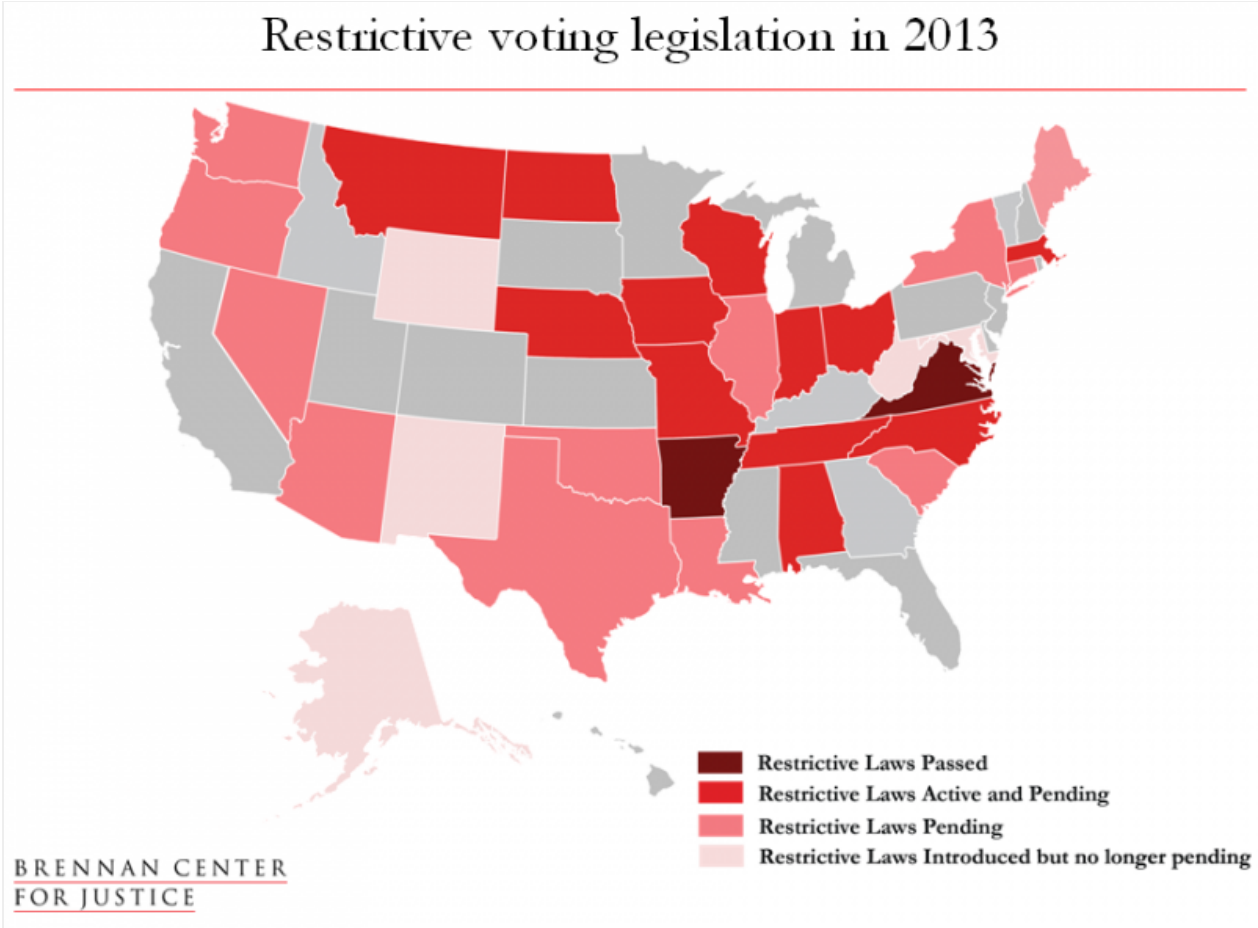
Although Republicans in some states continue to battle against voting rights, there is reason to believe that American voters will win the war. For one thing, some Republicans (hard to believe but true) are working with Democrats to expand access to the vote.

Since the 2012 elections some states like North Carolina and Arkansas continue down the road of a Tea Party utopia in which the top 1% makes all political decisions, including choosing elected representatives, while the rest of us just say bahhh. In fact, **North Carolina's** House Appropriations Committee passed its version of a more restrictive Voter ID bill on Tuesday.

According to the **Brennan Center of Justice**, 31 states introduced at least 80 laws intended to restrict voting rights.



Sixty-two of those laws are **pending** in 25 states. Twenty-five of those bills (in 12 states) are “active” meaning they made it passed introduction and referral to the appropriate committee. Two of these laws passed in 2 states.



Now for the good news which begins with pushback against efforts to suppress the vote.



After Florida's policies resulted in long waits, for some voters as long as 7 hours, **Rick Scott** did an about face on the policies he supported (and fought for in court challenges) before the election.

We need to have bipartisan legislation that deals with three issues," Scott told CNN interviewer Soledad O'Brien. "One, the length of our ballot. Two, we've got to allow our supervisors more flexibility in the size of their polling locations and, three, the number of days we have. We've got to look back at the number of days of early voting we had.

Subsequently, the state's House of Representatives **reversed** its pre-2012 laws that reduced voting hours, restricted early voting and reduced the options for polling places.

Earlier this month in Wisconsin, voters stood up to the Koch Brothers and ALEC showing overwhelming support to keep **same day registration** in an advisory referendum.

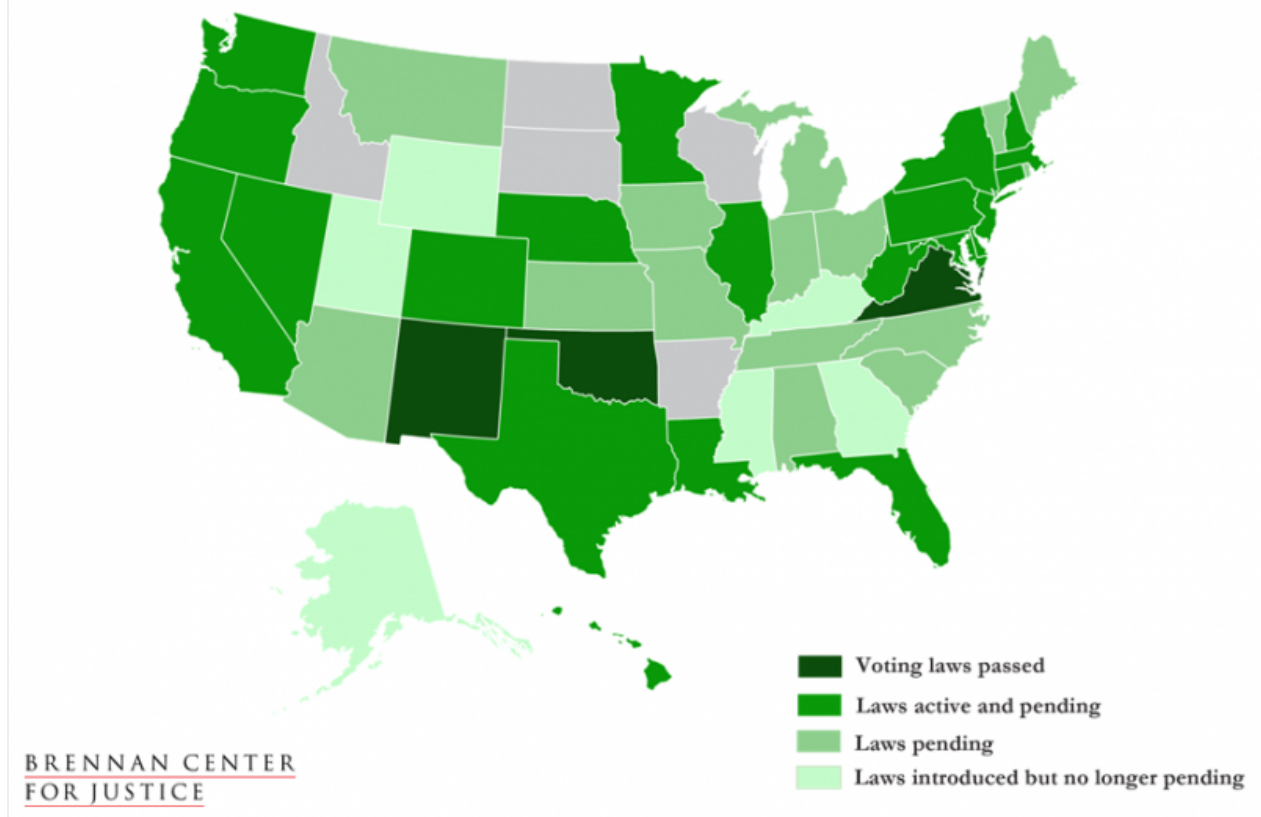
Efforts to impose restrictive voter ID requirements in **New Hampshire** were stepped back in March, by the State House's Election Law Committee.

"The Election Law Committee voted, 11-7, to recommend the House pass a bill that would leave in place the voter ID law as it operated during November's election, but repeal provisions that will tighten the list of acceptable forms of ID starting this fall."

More states introduced more laws to **expand** access to the vote.

Forty-five states introduced 195 laws to make voting access easier, with 155 of them still pending in 37 states. Forty-one of these laws are "active" in 21 states.

Laws to expand access to voting in 2013



Registering to vote will be easier now that New Mexico passed a law allowing automated registration at the DMV. Oklahoma modified its photo ID law to make voting more accessible in the state. Virginia passed a law that allows on-line registration.

One of the key obstacles to voting in 2012 were laws intended to create longer voting lines. In fact, a recent [study](#) on wait times identified a nexus between state policies and the amount of time voters would wait before casting their ballot.

*What this suggests is that the factors leading to long lines in at the polls start with state-level laws, policies, and practices that persist from year-to-year. What these laws, policies, and practices are remain to be specified. However, the persistence of long lines in the same states across time suggests that simply leaving it to the initiative of local election officials to solve the long-line problem in states such as Florida will result in only marginal improvements, at best. In other words, **in a state like Florida, even the best-performing counties are probably limited in how much better they could perform because of parameters imposed by state law.** (my emphasis)*

Aside from Florida, Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland and Virginia introduced laws intended to reduce wait times and bills remain active in Connecticut and Maryland.

Other proposals to increase voter access include:

- laws to modernize voter registration
- relax Voter ID/Proof of Citizenship laws
- **Increase automation in the voting process**
- 13 states introduced bill to either establish or enhance on-line registration
- Same Day registration is being considered in 17 states.
- Four states introduced bills to allow portability of a voter's registration within the state.
- Nineteen states proposed laws to introduce or increase in person early voting. (This includes bills awaiting signature by the governors of New Jersey and Maryland.)
- Delaware passed a bill to restore voting rights for people with criminal convictions. 14 other states introduced similar laws.
- At least 10 states introduced bills to allow students under 18 to pre-register.

There is still a lot of work to do. while some state's persist in trying to take the vote backwards, others are determined to move access to a fundamental right in a free society forward.

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