

# HOW TO FIGHT BARRIERS TO THE BALLOT

Voting is one of our most sacred rights as citizens—but it's never been a right enjoyed equally by all Americans. Marginalized communities—people of color, people with disabilities, students, the elderly—all face obstacles when trying to access the ballot box. Obstacles that are designed to suppress their vote.

In light of Supreme Court decisions, including *Louisiana v. Callais*, and extremist politicians attacking the right to vote more than we've seen since Jim Crow, ensuring we do everything we can to help ALL members of our communities vote is more important than ever. This worksheet will help you identify roadblocks and help voters overcome unjust barriers.

## VOTING CHECKLIST: START WITH THE BASICS ALL VOTERS NEED TO KNOW

- Deadline to register: \_\_\_\_\_
- Are there voter ID requirements in your state? \_\_\_\_\_
- Polling location and hours – both on Election Day and early voting period: \_\_\_\_\_
- Deadline to request a mail or absentee ballot: \_\_\_\_\_
- Date mail and absentee ballots are sent to voters: \_\_\_\_\_
- Deadline to return a mail or absentee ballot: \_\_\_\_\_
- Address to return a mail/absentee ballot or drop off a ballot : \_\_\_\_\_

Now let's work through several of the barriers different voters face—the extra steps they have to go through that many voters might take for granted. Putting yourself in their shoes can help us make sure everyone has equal access to the ballot.

## VOTING WITH A DISABILITY OR ILLNESS

- Is your polling place accessible or are there obstacles (steep ramps, gravel parking lots)?
- Are there voting machines at your precinct that are accessible?
- What are your state's absentee ballot rules?
- If you have to present information or ID in person to be able to vote absentee, do you have a friend, neighbor, or relative who can help?

**Voter Suppression Tactics:** Many states have limited access to mail and absentee voting and now the federal government is attacking mail voting with an illegal executive order. Some states have even tried to **criminalize** having a person assist a disabled voter at the polls.

## VOTING WITHOUT RELIABLE TRANSPORTATION

- What are the local services that provide rides to the polls?
- Do public transportation services or local ride-share companies provide fare-free days on election day? If so, which ones?
- For states with drop-off ballot boxes, are you allowed to have someone drop off your ballot for you?



**Voter Suppression Tactics:** State and local officials have [closed hundreds of poll sites](#) since *Shelby v. Holder* gutted the Voting Rights Act in 2013—and these closures often target communities of color. Having a precinct taken out of a community—especially if people are accustomed to going there and it’s in easy distance from their home or work—keeps people from voting.

## VOTING AS A STUDENT

- Is there a polling location on your campus? If your polling place is off campus, what’s your plan to get there?
- Can you use your student ID to vote and/or register?
- If you’re voting in your hometown but are away at school during the election, can you request and return an absentee ballot?

**Voter Suppression Tactics:** Localities have deliberately closed polling places on college campuses—including at Historically Black Colleges and Universities—and strict voter ID laws often don’t accept student IDs.

## ICE AT THE POLLS

**Despite threats from some administration officials, there are currently no official plans to deploy ICE or other federal agents at polling places.** But even threatening ICE presence is meant to keep Black and brown voters away from the polls.

We must be prepared to protect our neighbors and help them find a way to vote that would make them feel more secure—like mail-in or early voting—if they don’t feel safe going in person. Going to the polls in larger groups adds another layer of security. **And if you see an ICE agent near your polling place, tell your local election officials.**

To learn more, visit [www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/federal-agents-at-the-polls](http://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/federal-agents-at-the-polls).

## OTHER WAYS TO HELP

Fighting voter suppression doesn’t happen only on Election Day. And these are just some of the man-made barriers people face—it doesn’t include practices like gerrymandering that dilute votes and minority political power. This is a year-round fight—but one we can win!

- Continue focusing on local elections—statehouses draw maps and local officials run elections.
- Regularly check your registration—because extremists are purging the voter rolls—with your state’s department or board of elections.
- Host a voter registration drive.
- Become a poll worker. Visit [eac.gov/help-america-vote](http://eac.gov/help-america-vote) to learn how.
- After voting, find out how you can track your ballot at [www.vote.org/ballot-tracker-tools](http://www.vote.org/ballot-tracker-tools).
- If you need help related to voting, including on Election Day, contact the Election Protection hotline at **866-OUR-VOTE**.

Learn more at [redwine.blue/voting-rights](http://redwine.blue/voting-rights).  
And don’t forget to make your own plan to vote!



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