Ohio's new voter ID law blocked at least 7,000 votes from being counted in November election

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COLUMBUS, Ohio – Election officials rejected more than 7,000 Ohioans' provisional ballots in the 2024 elections for lack of proper identification, new state data shows, a record number and massive increase from years' past.

[The spike in rejections](#) comes after Statehouse Republicans in 2023 enacted one of the strictest voter photo identification requirements in the nation.

In 2006, Ohio became one of the first states to require voters to present identification to vote. Over the following four presidential elections, an average of less than 1,100 Ohioans' ballots were rejected under what became a looser set of laws that allowed people to show government-issued ID or utility bills, bank cards, or student ID to prove their identity.

But starting with the [Republican-backed change in 2023](#), Ohioans must now present photo identification issued by the federal government or the state of Ohio. Identification issued by other states is not sufficient, nor are the more lax forms of identification under prior law.

The record number of rejections is a "direct result of the new ID law," according to Aaron Ockerman, director of the Ohio Association of Election Officials.

"With this new, more stringent standard, if someone does not have a valid photo ID, they are asked to vote provisionally," he said. "The only way that provisional ballot will count is if they come to the board of elections and present a valid photo ID within the next four days. That very rarely happens because they didn't have the ID in the first place. Therefore, the ballot ultimately gets rejected."

The 7,053 rejected ballots are likely not the full scope of those blocked by the law – the figure wouldn't capture anyone who was rejected for lack of an ID and declined to submit a provisional ballot.

The idea of tightening the rules around voter identification had percolated in the statehouse for years. But Republicans only enacted the new requirements in the wake of President Donald Trump's baseless assertions that the 2020 election was "rigged" against him. Despite the infinitesimal rarity of voter fraud, sponsors said the bill was a means of ensuring all voters are who they say they are.

GOP Secretary of State Frank LaRose, Ohio's chief elections officer who supported the recent legal change, said in an interview Friday that there's always room for improvement. However, he suspects a "vast majority" of the 7,053 rejected voters probably saw how lopsided the elections were in Ohio and decided it just wasn't worth the trip to a county board of elections to cure their ballot and ensure it's formally counted. He did not provide data to support the claim.

LaRose added that the 7,000 ballots rejected are a small subset of the roughly 5.8 million who voted.

"This is the photo ID law working as intended, doing what it's supposed to do to make sure that only registered voters with the proper photo ID, so they prove they are who they say they are when they go to vote, only those individuals (vote)," he said.

Ohio's presidential, statewide, and Supreme Court races were all won with double digit margins. But a U.S. Senate seat was decided by a 3.6% (about 206,000 votes) spread. Twenty-three local races were close enough to trigger an automatic recount, according to data from LaRose's office. Three contests were determined by three votes, and three came down to a single vote.

State Rep. Thomas Hall, a central Ohio Republican who sponsored the voter ID law, said in a text message it's "concerning seeing all the numbers on rejected IDs." He said Ohio should implement some kind of data collection mechanism to hear from voters why they lack ID. (LaRose said he thinks voters would tell poll workers to mind their own business if they asked, and poll workers have enough to do.)

The new voting law created a program that provides free identification cards for citizens. From when the law took effect in April 2023 through October 2024, more than 615,000 Ohioans received free state identification cards. Cleveland.com and The Plain Dealer have requested up-to-date information.

However, as voting rights advocates have pointed out, the rules require people to travel to a county board of election with proper documentation like Social Security

cards and birth certificates. Some people can't find these documents or can't afford the time and expense required for new ones.

In a previous interview, Catherine Turcer, executive director of Common Cause Ohio, said the policymakers ranged somewhere between intentional and reckless in terms of depriving people of the right to vote.

"Was that intentional? Probably," she said. "Or at minimum, they were very comfortable letting it happen."

Laws like Ohio's are popular with voters. According to October 2024 [public opinion sampling from Gallup](#), 84% of Americans – a broad, bipartisan majority – support requiring all voters to provide their photo identification at the polls to vote.