

# House Votes to Require Proof of Citizenship in Federal Elections

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**By Michael Gold**  
**New York Times**

The House on Thursday passed legislation that would require people to prove that they are U.S. citizens when they register to vote, the latest effort in a Republican-led push to tighten voting laws that is tied to President Trump's debunked claims of widespread election fraud.

Voting by noncitizens happens rarely, and it is already illegal in federal elections. But Mr. Trump and his Republican allies repeatedly insisted throughout his 2024 campaign that noncitizens were flooding to the polls as he railed against immigration and tried to sow doubt about election integrity.

The House bill, which passed on a vote of 220 to 208, would order states to obtain proof of citizenship, such as a passport or a birth certificate, in person from those seeking to register to vote. It would also require states to remove noncitizens from their voter rolls.

The legislation echoes [a far-reaching executive order that Mr. Trump signed last month in an effort to change U.S. voting rules](#) to address grievances stemming from his lie that the 2020 election was stolen from him.

Four centrist-leaning Democrats joined Republicans to pass the bill, known as the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility, or SAVE, Act. But it faces long odds in the Senate, where seven Democrats would have to join Republicans to allow it to proceed to a vote.

Conservatives have long argued for stronger laws to combat voter fraud, something that election experts say is exceedingly rare. For years, they have pushed for laws requiring voters to offer photo identification when they arrive at the polls.

But as Republicans tried to make immigration the center of last year's election, they began to embrace a baseless narrative that Democrats were intentionally allowing, if not encouraging, immigrants to cross the border illegally in order to register them to vote. The charge echoes the themes of [a conspiracy theory known as replacement theory](#), which asserts that Western elites want to "replace" and disempower white Americans.

Representative Stephanie Bice, Republican of Oklahoma, said that the immigration surge during President Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s term had “diluted the voting power that is reserved only for American citizens.”

A study by the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University looked at 23.5 million votes cast during the 2016 presidential election and found only 30 suspected incidents of potential noncitizen voting.

Democrats opposing the bill framed it as an unnecessary effort to address a rare practice that is already illegal. And they warned that the legislation would have substantial unintended consequences, making it more difficult for large swaths of Americans — including women who change their name upon marriage — to vote.

“Republicans would force Americans into a paperwork nightmare, burying voter registration under a mountain of bureaucracy and red tape,” Representative Joseph D. Morelle of New York said.

Much of their argument focused on married women whose birth certificates have names that do not match their current legal names. Democrats argued that they would find it difficult to produce the documentation required by the bill, thus disenfranchising them.

“Are you a woman who changed your name when you got married?” Hillary Rodham Clinton, the former secretary of state and Democratic presidential nominee, wrote in a message on social media. “Congress is considering a bill that could make it much harder for you to vote.” Her post urged women to call their congressional representatives to oppose the bill, and after the measure passed, [she added another message encouraging them to “make sure your senators know you expect them to stand against it.”](#)

Mr. Morelle responded to every Republican who spoke in favor of the measure by citing the number of women in their district who might be affected by it and the number of residents without passports who might find themselves unable to register to vote.

Republicans dismissed those arguments as fearmongering and said states could set up their own processes to address those whose names did not match their birth certificates.

Thursday's vote was the second time in two years the bill had passed the House. Last year, it died in the Democratic-led Senate.