



# Building Inclusive Elections Begins with Voter Registration

## The For The People Act's Automatic Voter Registration and Same Day Voter Registration Provisions

Voter registration has long served as a barrier to voting. Getting and staying registered to vote can be confusing and cumbersome, and each election is the reason millions of eligible people—particularly people of color and low-income people—are denied their democratic rights. During the November 2018 election, only two-thirds of eligible people were registered to vote. That's about 75 million U.S. citizens age 18 or older did not possess the basic pre-requisite for voting.

Original voter registration laws were designed to restrict the electoral and political power of Black people, immigrants and workers. Registration laws suppressed voter turnout from the very beginning, and they continue to reduce the number of registered Black and Brown voters today. While 71% of the white voting-eligible population was registered to vote in November 2018, only 64% of the Black, 54% of the Latinx, and 53% of the Asian American voting-eligible populations were registered.

The United States is unique in the hurdles we make people clear to register to vote - in democracies around the world, governments bear responsibility for verifying a voter's eligibility. The For The People Act would alleviate the burdens voter registration places on individual voters by requiring states to implement two common sense voter registration reforms: Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) and Same Day Registration (SDR). Together, these two reforms would ensure voter registration is no longer a barrier to the ballot box for millions of people.

DECLARATION FOR  
**AMERICAN  
DEMOCRACY**





# The Challenge

# The Solution

**A full quarter of otherwise eligible people who reported not being registered to vote in the 2018 general election cited barriers to registration, such as not knowing where or how to register, missing registration deadlines, having difficulty with English, or suffering from a permanent illness or disability.**

Getting registered to vote can be difficult. For many people, it requires taking time off work and traveling to locations not accessible by public transportation, which can be especially burdensome for low-income voters. Or it may require printing a form, coping one's identification, and finding an envelope and stamp to mail their registration in, the complications of which were laid bare by strict quarantines and a dangerous pandemic. Many states and localities do not offer translated registration materials or interpretation services, making registration all the more difficult for voters with limited English proficiency.

Staying on the registration rolls can also prove tricky. Each year, people are purged from the voter rolls because they have not voted recently or because flawed data incorrectly indicate they are ineligible. Those who are wrongfully removed often do not learn they were purged until they show up to the polls and are denied the opportunity to cast a ballot that will be counted. There is growing evidence these "voter purges" disproportionately remove Black and Brown voters from the registration rolls.

Registration deadlines in many states come well before candidate and issue campaigning peaks and people have become fully interested in elections, meaning that some people who decide to vote in the weeks before an election, but are unregistered, are unable to do so.

**The For the People Act's provisions requiring AVR and SDR represent common sense reforms that would streamline voter registration for individuals and states alike, close registration gaps between communities, and ensure our voting rolls are accurate and up to date.**

Through AVR, government agencies use information they already have on file to identify individuals who are eligible to vote and add them to the voter rolls in a seamless, paperless process. When implemented well across an array of government agencies, AVR helps close registration gaps between communities of color and white communities, as well as between income and age groups.

SDR remedies inaccurate voter rolls, allowing voters who moved recently, or who were never added to the voter rolls because of bureaucratic errors, to update their information and cast a ballot that counts. SDR also eliminates the bureaucratic hurdles of voter registration deadlines. AVR also helps states update residents' voter information if they have moved or changed their name. AVR also reduces the administrative burden for election administrators, and it decreases the potential for inaccuracies, ensuring that voter rolls are accurate and up to date.

Through SDR, voters can register and cast their ballot at the same time, during early voting and on Election Day. Even with AVR, some voters may not make it onto the rolls or have their registrations updated before Election Day. SDR is a critical failsafe for these voters, ensuring they can cast a ballot that counts (3). Implementing SDR increases voter turnout - states with SDR have the highest voter turnout rates in the nation.

**According to the Pew Research Center, 65% of Americans support AVR, and 64% support SDR.**

**Our democracy is strongest when all people can participate, especially by vocalizing their views and voting. The For the People Act would ensure all eligible people are registered to vote and remove registration as a barrier to people exercising their fundamental right to vote.**

**Congress should implement the For the People Act to ensure voter registration is accessible, secure, and equitable, and to build a more inclusive democracy.**

