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To the Editor: Letter or Op Ed piece

The proposed “SAVE America” law is described as needed to protect our elections. But when we look at the facts, this bill does not solve a real problem. Instead, it would make voting more difficult or impossible for millions of citizens, while spreading fear and disinformation.

Supporters say the bill is needed to stop non-citizens from voting. But experience at local and state elections, as well as verified studies, show that this is an exceedingly rare occurrence.

The Heritage Foundation, a conservative public policy think tank that supports Republican policies, found only seventy-seven verified voter fraud cases over twenty-four years. This is minuscule compared to the over a billion voters in those years. It is a vanishingly small number.

The Cato Institute, a Libertarian public policy group that supports limited government, has also said that non-citizen voting is rare. These are not liberal political organizations. When groups such as the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute, who are on the political right, say the voter fraud problem is rare, it shows the issue with the proposed law is not partisan — it is about evidence that does not support the claims of voter fraud.

After the 2020 election, many claims of widespread fraud were brought to court. Judges appointed by both Republican and Democratic administrations rejected all those claims because there was not enough evidence of fraud. President Trump’s first term Attorney General, William Barr, also said there was no evidence of fraud large enough to change the election results. Audits in states like Arizona and Georgia confirmed the election results were accurate.

It is already illegal for non-citizens to vote in federal elections. Federal law makes it a serious crime that can lead to fines, prison, and deportation. Voters must swear that they are U.S. citizens when they register. States already check voter records against other government databases. We already have rules in place to protect elections. And these rules and practices are effective.

The SAVE America bill would require people to show extra proof of citizenship, such as a passport or certified birth certificate, to register to vote. That might sound simple, but many Americans do not have those papers readily available. The Brennan Center for Justice reports that millions of citizens do not have easy access to these documents.

This would particularly affect older Americans, and specifically people - usually women - who changed their names after marriage. Lower-income Americans can be affected the most because getting extra documents costs money and time. A passport or certified

birth certificate can cost over \$100, and replacing lost records can take time off work, which again costs money. Some, but not all, documents can be accessed online, but a visit to a government agency for certification is usually needed.

The proposed bill also requires in-person voter registration. While on the surface this sounds reasonable, it is a significant problem for those in the military who are not stationed in their home state yet maintain their voting rights there, not to mention military spouses who accompany their service members overseas. Registering in person would be nigh impossible. The same holds true for U.S. citizens who currently live or work overseas.

Additionally, limits to voting by mail in the proposal would particularly affect rural voters and people who can't leave work or home on a weekday. For example, in Yuba County for the 2024 election, over 30,567 Yuba County votes were cast; 25,370 (83%) were by mail. In Sutter County, 90% were cast by mail.

Passage of the SAVE Act would cause rural, low income, women, military, and people who have limited access to internet to have the most difficulty exercising their right to vote.

The result of all these changes: legal voters are blocked from voting.

Good laws fix real problems. This bill focuses on a problem that is not only vanishingly rare, but it would disenfranchise legal voters. Instead of building trust, it may make people more worried about elections.

We all want to protect our elections. We should make changes based on facts. Current laws make voting secure and fair while also making sure every eligible citizen can vote. A Senate vote on this legislation is scheduled for early March.

The American Association of University Women, at national and state and local levels, opposes its passage.

Respectfully,

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