



May 2, 2025

Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Members of the Committee,

VoteRiders is a national non-partisan, non-profit organization with a mission to ensure that all citizens are able to exercise their freedom to vote.

Founded in 2012, VoteRiders focuses on eliminating ID-related barriers to voting and educating voters on ID requirements to vote. VoteRiders provides free, direct help to any voter who needs an ID to vote. We have helped tens of thousands of eligible voters get the underlying documents they need to cast a ballot, such as U.S. birth certificates, and/or naturalization documents, and also cover all document and transportation costs associated with getting IDs such as a driver's license or state ID. **We are testifying in opposition to initiated bill LD 1149.**

Maine's elections are already some of the most secure and best-run in the nation. The state's election administration has often been a model for other states. LD 1149 would cause Maine to plummet from the top to the bottom of the list of states in terms of voter access.

If Approved, LD 1149 Would Disenfranchise Voters in Every Election

VoteRiders' on the ground work gives us a unique and acute understanding of the extent to which photo ID laws present a powerful barrier to the ballot box for millions of Americans. Simply put, voter ID laws are a solution in search of a problem. The in-person fraud that these laws attempt to "solve for" is vanishingly rare. It is a dangerous misconception that everyone has an ID. In fact, the enduring existence of VoteRiders is proof that this is not the case.

Accessing photo ID is often both expensive and time consuming. Obtaining or updating an ID may require first applying for an array of other identification documents like a birth certificate or Social Security card. Accessing these documents is especially difficult for voters who were never issued a US birth certificate, such as older voters who were born at home, Mainers living near the border who were born in Canadian hospitals, or for Native voters born on reservations. At VoteRiders we frequently assist voters who discover that the name or other information on their birth certificate is wrong. Voters born out of state may have an especially hard time accessing their birth certificate. Other individuals may have lost or misplaced their birth certificate, or have one that is damaged or illegible and not accepted at ID-issuing offices.

Voters who live in extremely rural locations or otherwise do not have a traditional street address may lack a mailing address, which makes providing the proof of residency documents required to get an ID especially burdensome. On top of this, most ID-issuing offices operate only during business hours. Many, especially those in rural areas like most of Maine, are not accessible by public transportation, making them difficult to access for those who lack transportation, have mobility challenges, or can not afford to skip work.

Even once an individual receives an ID, keeping it up to date requires ongoing commitments of time and money as they must update their ID whenever it expires, if they move, or change their name, for example, due to marriage or divorce. According to a study done by the Movement Advancement Project in 2022, a Maine driver's license costs nearly 5 hours' worth of minimum wage work, and a birth certificate can cost even more.¹

LD 1149 Would Have Dire Effects on Historically Marginalized Communities

In 2023, VoteRiders conducted a nationwide study analyzing who lacks photo ID across the country. Our research shows that nearly 21 million people, or one in 10 eligible US citizen voters, do not have a non-expired driver's license.² Another 28.6 million (12%) have a non-expired license, but the license does not have both their current name and current address. These statistics make clear that a photo ID law in Maine would disenfranchise large numbers of eligible voters.

While photo ID laws such as LD 1149 impact all US citizens' ability to participate in elections, they have disproportionate impacts on historically marginalized communities:

- People over the age of 65 make up about 23% of the Maine population, and 5 percent of Mainers are over 80, which is 25 percent higher than the national average.
 - Seniors are more likely to no longer drive due to health or mobility issues, which makes them much less likely to have an unexpired driver's license. Our research shows that the proportion of voters in their 80s without a license (14.1%) is more than twice as large as the proportion of voters in their 70s without a license (6.5%).
- Photo ID laws disproportionately impact young people as well. Our research found that 41% of US citizens between the ages of 18-24 and 38% of those between the ages of 25-29 lack a driver's license with their current name and/or address.
- Twenty percent of people who self-identified as having a disability do not have a license, and an additional 9% have a license but without their current name and/or address, compared to 6% of non-disabled people who do not have a license and an additional 13% who have a license but without their current name and/or address.
- Almost half of Black Americans ages 18-29 do not have a driver's license with their current name and/or address (47%), and 30% do not have a license at all. While 42% of

¹ mapresearch.org/file/MAP-Identity-Documents-report-2022.pdf

² [Voter ID 2023 survey Key Results June 2024 updatev2.docx](#)

White Americans ages 18-29 do not have a driver's license with their current name and/or address, only 5% do not have a license.

In addition to directly disenfranchising voters at every election, voter ID laws also indirectly disenfranchise voters by creating confusion. Our research showed that half of Americans who live in a state requiring photo ID to vote in-person did not know their state's law, and did not realize that they will need this type of ID to successfully cast a ballot. The confusing nature of voter ID laws can even cause voters who *do* have an accepted form of voter ID to opt out after mistakenly thinking they can't comply. And an ID requirement can create conditions for voter intimidation at the polls.

LD 1149 Has Unfortunate Similarities to A Recent Failed Ohio Photo ID Law

LD 1149 seeks to make Maine join the list of states that have actively disenfranchised US citizens from voting by passing a restrictive photo ID requirement for voting. By adopting a strict photo ID law Maine would be joining states like Georgia, Kansas, Mississippi, Nebraska, and Ohio.

The text of LD 1149 closely mirrors Ohio's photo ID law, which was enacted in 2023. Both have the same, extremely narrow list of only four types of unexpired photo IDs that would be accepted at the polls. The first two Ohio elections held under the new photo ID law demonstrate that it did not make the state's elections more secure. In fact, instead it kept thousands of Ohioans from making their voices heard. In the November 2023 election, the percentage of provisional ballots rejected due to lack of identification jumped to 28.4%, over 20 points higher than the year prior. In the November 2024 election over 7,000 eligible, registered voters tried to cast a ballot but ultimately had their provisional ballot thrown out because they did not have one of the four types of accepted unexpired ID.

According to Aaron Ockerman, director of the Ohio Association of Election Officials, the record number of rejected ballots was a "direct result of the new ID law."³ A high percentage of the rejected ballots were of those voters who had a valid ID but could not use it to vote simply because it had expired. Rep. Thomas Hall, the Ohio legislator who sponsored the photo ID law, has since admitted that the high number of rejected ballots is a "problem" and expressed remorse at passing the bill.⁴ Maine should not follow in Ohio's footsteps towards a clear and certainly disastrous outcome for voters across the state.

Conclusion

If passed, LD 1149 would directly harm and disenfranchise thousands of Mainers who likely lack the time or financial resources to overcome newly-imposed photo ID-related barriers to the ballot box. At the same time, it would confuse, intimidate, and indirectly disenfranchise many more eligible voters. Maine is a national leader in election administration, and we urge the

³ [Ohio's new voter ID law blocked at least 7,000 votes from being counted in November election - LimaOhio.com](#)

⁴ [Ohio's new photo ID law has already blocked thousands from voting since 2023 - cleveland.com](#)

voters of this state to continue that trend and to reject this unnecessary and burdensome change to the state's election law.

For the above reasons, we respectfully request that the Committee oppose LD 1149.