

electionline Weekly – March 20, 2008

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I. In Focus This Week

As Supreme Court mulls photo ID law, states consider similar bills

Nearly a dozen states press forward with legislation to require a photo ID at the polls

By [Stanford Turner](#)

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While the country waits a likely June ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court on the legality of the Indiana's photo-only voter ID law, other states are considering enacting similar bills in this year's legislative sessions.

Lawmakers in 11 states, including California, Illinois, and Maryland have all pursued new legislation requiring photo ID.

In Oklahoma, the House approved [H.B. 2956](#), a bill which would require voters to produce some form of photo ID when voting. The bill, which is now being reconsidered by the Senate, has riled Democrats, who claim it would reduce Democratic turnout by [3 percent](#).

Republicans lawmakers, who unanimously supported the measure in the House, counter that the bill would restore faith in the voting process.

Florida, Georgia and Indiana require voters to present photo IDs at polling places.

Mississippi's Senate passed [a measure](#) that would enact a similar voter ID requirement. The bill drew objections from the state chapter of the NAACP, whose leaders argued that there has been no evidence of voter fraud and that imposing a stringent ID requirement would exclude otherwise eligible voters. The bill [died in a House committee](#) this week.

Voter ID remains a divisive partisan issue. Most votes still follow nearly unanimous party lines. And with so much at stake for both parties in November, partisan tensions are high. Yet, the race for the White House might not be the impetus behind legislative action on photo ID.

Tim Storey, senior fellow, at the National Conference of State Legislatures, said while growing push for voter ID has no correlation to this year's presidential election, he noted "that there is a great deal of scrutiny in the election this year".

Tova Wang, democracy fellow, of The Century Foundation who wrote a [draft report](#) on voter identification for the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, said that the passage of the Help America Vote Act in 2002 prompted many state lawmakers to go beyond the national mandate requiring first-time voters who registered by mail to present ID and instead enact more sweeping legislation.

"Though the [federal] rule is obviously extremely limited in the number of people it impacts, the debate, and that this was the first time any kind of ID requirement was put in a federal law, set the stage," she said.

Whether photo ID disenfranchises would-be voters remains at the core of partisan arguments. Lacking any comprehensive statistical analysis, both Democrats and Republicans tend to rely on anecdotes.

David Muhlhausen, senior policy analyst, for the Heritage Foundation released a report last year that asserted voter ID laws have no impact on whether people [go to the polls](#).

"Identification laws largely do not have the claimed negative impact on voter turnout based on state-to-state comparisons," Muhlhausen wrote.

His research determined "when statistically significant and negative relationships are found, the effects are so small that the findings offer little policy significance."

Still, battles over voter ID continue to be waged in state capitols, mostly unsuccessfully.

- Lawmakers in California, Colorado and New Mexico have either rejected or postponed any action on voter ID bills.
- A Virginia photo-only voter ID law patterned after Indiana's legislation could be debated next year, pending the outcome of the U.S. Supreme Court decision.
- Maryland lawmakers have scheduled hearings this month on a group of voter ID bills, including a photo-only measure.

II. Election Reform News This Week

While the only thing certain in Colorado is that voters will head to the polls on November 4 to cast a ballot for president, it's [looking less likely that the ballots will be cast on paper](#). According to the *Associated Press*, state leaders backed off a plan to switch to paper ballots this year. With time running out to make the change to paper, Gov. Bill Ritter (D) said the secretary of state's decision to recertify of the machines, combined with the clerks' opposition to the switch, led him to change his mind. [Money also became an issue](#). State officials had planned to spend \$11 million to pay for the switch to paper, but most of that money dried up this week as lawmakers finalized their proposed budget.

[Demopolis, Alabama poll worker Alice Boggs recently went before the city council and proposed combining city elections into one, centralized voted place](#) (a vote center). "People were coming in the one place and you say 'No, this isn't where you're supposed to vote, this is where you vote for the general elections.' Then they get mad at us and we get cussed out and we send them off to another place," poll worker Alice Boggs told the council. To prevent this, Boggs presented a solution by having a single voting location at a centrally located center that would house all five district boxes and an accessible voting machine. Furthermore, the single voting locale would only be for city elections. According the *Demopolis Times*, a decision is pending.

It's not Folsom prison, but [voting machines on Ontario County, N.Y. could soon be doing time in the county jail](#). According to the *Daily Messenger*, the county Public Works Committee decided to focus on a renovation estimated to cost about \$200,000 at the old jail that would provide for the storage, testing and maintenance of about 100 new voting machines — the number the county will have by next year. Tom Harvey, a county planner, said Monday that each machine weighs 285 pounds and requires about 15 square feet of space. That accounts for the work space needed around each machine so it can be maintained and tested several times a year. The renovation of about 3,000 square feet at the old jail would also provide for storage of blank and used ballots.

And speaking of prison, there was action this week in a couple of election fraud cases throughout the country. In [Alabama](#), a former clerk of the circuit court in Hale County was indicted on 13 vote fraud-related charges, including nine counts of criminal possession of a forged instrument, two counts of promoting illegal absentee voting and two counts of first-degree perjury. In [Kentucky](#), Charles "Dobber" Weaver, fire chief in Manchester and an election officer in the May 2006

primary, pleaded guilty in federal court to a charge that he conspired to deprive voters of having their ballots counted.

III. Opinion This Week

National: [Presidential primaries](#); [Vote-by-mail, II](#); [Justice Department](#)

California: [Voting machines](#); [Early voting](#)

Colorado: [Paper ballots](#); [Instant runoff voting](#)

Florida: [Quirkiness](#); [Presidential primary](#); [Crawford County](#)

Indiana: [Vote centers](#)

Massachusetts: [Young poll workers](#); [Paper ballots](#)

Missouri: [Voter ID](#)

Ohio: [Paper ballots](#); [Presidential primary](#)

Pennsylvania: [Paper back-ups](#)

South Carolina: [Election dates](#)

Utah: [Elections oversight](#)

Wisconsin: [Voter ID](#)

Some sites require registration

IV. Job Postings

All job listings must be received by 12 p.m. Eastern on Wednesday for publication in our Thursday newsletter. Job listings are free but may be edited for length. Whenever possible, include Internet information. Please email job postings to mmoretti@electionline.org

Poll Monitoring/Exit Poll Coordinator — The Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, New York City. AALDEF is national organization that protects and promotes the civil rights of Asian Americans through litigation, advocacy and community education. AALDEF has a 15-person staff and is supported by foundation and corporate grants, individual contributions, and special events. A one-year position is available in AALDEF's Asian American Democracy Project. AALDEF's Asian American Democracy Project seeks to promote fairness in the electoral process and invigorate the civic participation of Asian Americans, especially new citizens and persons not yet fluent in English. By expanding access to the electoral process for Asian Americans, AALDEF improves the quality of democracy for all Americans. The Poll Monitoring/Exit Poll Coordinator will manage several volunteers and work with other Asian American community groups to conduct a non-partisan exit poll of Asian American voters and an Election Day monitoring effort in twelve states. The job includes recruiting and training volunteers; supervising the development, translation and printing of materials; overseeing logistics for volunteer assignments; and giving educational presentations about the Project. The Coordinator will also oversee post-election follow-up and assist in writing a report about Asian American participation in the 2008 elections. **Qualifications:** Ability to supervise volunteers and work with a wide variety of community leaders and organizations; strong knowledge of MS Access and other database systems; bilingual ability in an Asian language, preferably Chinese, Korean, or Vietnamese, is desirable; detail oriented and focused; strong organizational and communication skills; experience in community organizing is helpful; ability to travel and work on weekends. **Application:** Send a cover letter, resume, and three references to: Voting Rights Coordinator Search; AALDEF; 99 Hudson Street, 12th floor; New York, NY 10013-2815; fax: 212-966-4303; Email: info@aaldef.org (put "voting rights coordinator search" in the subject line). **Deadline:** Applicants will be considered on a rolling basis until filled. For more information, contact Glenn D. Magpantay at 212-966-5932 or info@aaldef.org.
