

Absurd Argument Against Voter ID

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Last week, [Pennsylvania](#) U.S. Senate candidate Democrat [John Fetterman](#) said that requiring a voter I.D. is “insidious and unnecessary,” “outrageous,” “illogical,” “unfair,” and “simply voter suppression.” He says that concerns about vote fraud are a myth. But if concerns about vote fraud are a delusion, it is a delusion shared by virtually all other countries and by the vast majority of American voters (79%).

All 47 European countries, except for parts of the United Kingdom, require a government-issued photo I.D. to vote. The U.K. has introduced legislation to mandate I.D.s, which are already required in Northern Ireland and parts of England.

In some countries, even driver’s licenses aren’t acceptable forms of voter identity verification. The Czech Republic and [Russia](#) requires passports or military-issued I.D.s. Most other countries use national identity cards to also verify citizenship. Still others, such as Colombia and our neighbor, [Mexico](#), require biometric voter I.D.s. Our other neighbor, Canada, also requires a government-issued photo voter I.D. to vote.

Despite Fetterman’s claims of voter suppression, requiring voter photo I.D.s has increased voter turnout in other countries and U.S. states. Turnout in Mexico increased after sweeping reforms were enacted in 1991. Inconveniently, people have to go in person to apply for the I.D.s and then pick them up at a later date. For some Mexicans, that means trips each way of almost 100 miles. Absentee ballots are completely banned.

You would think that voter turnout would plummet, but that’s not what happened. In the three presidential elections after Mexico’s reforms, 68% of eligible citizens voted compared to only 59% in the three elections before the changes.

When Georgia took the modest step of requiring voters to include the last four digits of their Social Security numbers on absentee ballots, the reform was met with corporate boycotts. Compare that with Europe, where 35 of the 47 countries entirely ban absentee voting for citizens who reside domestically.

Another ten countries have absentee ballots, but voters can only collect them by going in person and presenting photo I.D. Most of those ten countries limit absentee voting to those who can provide third-party verification of hospitalization or military service.

Even during the COVID lockdowns, unlike the U.S., Europe made few exceptions. [Poland](#) allowed mail-in ballots for everyone in 2020 as a one-time measure, as did two cities in Russia. But Poland’s plan played out poorly. Other countries saw these problems

and were dissuaded from following suit. France made very limited exceptions, temporarily allowing sick or at-risk individuals to vote absentee.

In all European and developed countries, strict chain of custody regulations exist for ballot boxes. Ballot boxes being left out unattended at 3 a.m., as we saw in Pennsylvania, is not something that we see outside of the United States. Other countries not only monitor ballot boxes at all times, but they also check government-issued photo I.D.s to ensure who is putting ballots in the boxes.

Although the rest of the developed world also debates how to balance [voter fraud](#) prevention with ease of voting, there is agreement across the political spectrum (e.g., Canada and Mexico) that people need to verify their identities.

Some countries have learned their lesson the hard way. In Northern Ireland, where a bitter sectarian conflict extended to hardball electoral machinations, voter fraud was described as “widespread and systemic” on all sides. As a result, both Conservative and Labour governments instituted reforms. In 1985, conservative Margaret Thatcher passed legislation requiring voters to identify themselves before being given a ballot.

After a 1998 government report found that medical cards were used as I.D.s and could be “easily forged or applied for fraudulently,” the left wing Labour government made voter identification cards much more difficult to forge and took other measures to prevent people from registering to vote multiple times. These anti-fraud provisions led to an immediate 11 percent reduction in total registrations.

Former IRA Belfast commander Brendan Hughes recounted to a group of academics in their 2017 report how he had used a fleet of taxis to ferry fraudulent voters from one polling station to another, and how wigs, clothes, and glasses were used to alter voters’ appearances.

Countries such as Sweden, France and Canada are hardly anti-democratic, yet they are out of step with John Fetterman’s ideas of election security. Perhaps it is Fetterman’s ideas that will prove anti-democratic.

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