



How West Virginia Elections Would Look Different if the Freedom to Vote Act Had Been Enacted

By Greta Bedekovics, Sydney Bryant, and Alice Lillydahl | October 11, 2024

The Freedom to Vote Act (FTVA) would expand access to the ballot box for millions of Americans and ensure that all citizens can easily exercise their right to vote, regardless of their ZIP code. At the same time, this transformational federal voting rights legislation would strengthen election security, improve election administration and campaign finance transparency, and ban partisan gerrymandering.

The FTVA would make voting easier and more secure for 1.4 million voting-age West Virginia citizens, of which more than 877,000 are currently registered to vote. A new report from the Center for American Progress provides analysis and statistical extrapolations to illustrate how the 2024 and subsequent election cycles would be transformed if the FTVA's key voting policies had been enacted in 2022, when the legislation was blocked through the use of the filibuster on the U.S. Senate floor.¹

Analysis and projections for West Virginia, based on previous academic and expert research as well as original research, demonstrate the transformative impact the FTVA could have for voters in the state.

Unless otherwise cited, the author conducted original analysis and created projections primarily based on data published by the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Election Assistance Commission for past federal election cycles. For a comprehensive look at the data analyzed for this fact sheet, see [here](#).

To put some of the findings below into perspective, the 2018 West Virginia U.S. Senate election was decided by only 19,000 voters.²

19,000

voters decided the 2018 West Virginia U.S. Senate election

92,000

additional West Virginia voters would likely cast a ballot in 2024 general election

Read the full report:
[Pass the Freedom to Vote Act: How Elections Would Look Different This Year and in the Future](#)

Same-day voter registration

The FTVA would ensure eligible West Virginia citizens can register to vote at the polls on Election Day and during an early voting period.³ Same-day voter registration (SDR) greatly benefits communities that tend to move more frequently and therefore need to update their voter registration information more often; Hispanic Americans and young Americans are among the demographic populations that move around the most frequently.⁴ Additionally, SDR helps mitigate issues with inaccurate voter roll purges that often disproportionately affect voters of color.⁵ The SDR policy in the FTVA would ensure that voters inaccurately removed from the voter rolls are able not only to re-register at the polls but also to cast a nonprovisional ballot.

Across the past three federal election cycles, Hispanic voters in states with SDR had an average voter turnout rate that was 6.6 percentage points higher than that of Hispanic voters in states without SDR; during the last presidential election, it was 4.5 percentage points higher. Additionally, academic experts have found that SDR increases youth voter turnout by between 3.1 percentage points and 7.3 percentage points.⁶ Given these findings:

- Nearly **7,600 additional Hispanic voters** would likely cast a ballot if voter turnout for West Virginian Hispanic voters was at the same rate as for Hispanic voters in states with SDR.
- As many as **11,000 more young West Virginians**—those ages 18 to 24—would likely cast a ballot in the 2024 general election.

Voting by mail

The FTVA would ensure that all West Virginia voters can request a mail-in ballot.⁷ During the last general election, states that allowed all voters to request a mail-in ballot (no-excuse states) had a 19 percent average vote-by-mail rate, compared with 5.1 percent for states that required a preapproved excuse (excuse states). Additionally, no-excuse states had an average voter turnout rate that was 6.7 percentage points higher than that of excuse states. Given these findings:

- Nearly **129,000 West Virginians** who have participated in recent elections would likely cast their ballot by mail instead of in person for the 2024 general election.
- Approximately **92,000 additional voters** would likely cast a ballot in the 2024 general election if voter turnout in West Virginia increased by 6.7 percentage points, mirroring higher turnouts seen in no-excuse states.

Ballot drop boxes

The FTVA would ensure West Virginians have access to ballot drop boxes 24 hours per day, 7 days per week in order to efficiently, cost-effectively, and securely return mail-in ballots. In states that allow all voters to request a mail-in ballot and provide drop boxes, on average, 27.9 percent of mail-in ballots are returned by drop box. Given the requirement for drop boxes in the FTVA, CAP analysis finds that:

- More than **19 drop boxes** would be available to voters across West Virginia, including some 24/7 drop boxes.
- Approximately **41,000 voters** would likely return their ballot to a drop box.

Early in-person voting

The FTVA would ensure all Americans have access to at least two weeks of early in-person voting (EIPV), including on weekends. With only 10 days of early voting, West Virginia is among 10 states that will not offer a minimum of two weeks of EIPV for the 2024 general election.

During the previous two general elections, states with at least two weeks of EIPV had a voter turnout rate that was, on average, 3 percentage points higher than states without a minimum of two weeks of EIPV. For the 2022 general election, on average, the EIPV rate—the percentage of total ballots that are cast early in person—was 22.4 percent in states with a minimum of two weeks of EIPV.

In 2022, with a 23.9 percent EIPV rate, West Virginia was the only state with less than two weeks of EIPV that had an EIPV rate higher than the average 22.4 percent rate for states with at least two weeks of EIPV. While this is a positive finding in terms of voters being able to take advantage of early voting opportunities, West Virginia habitually has one of the lowest citizen voter turnout rates in the country: In 2022, the state had a voter turnout rate of only 38.4 percent.⁸ This finding shows that of the West Virginian voters who do turn out to vote, many prefer to vote early in person. West Virginians would likely use and benefit from additional opportunities to cast their ballots early. Given these findings, with enactment of the FTVA:

- West Virginians would have access to at least four more days of early in-person voting.
- If West Virginia had a voter turnout rate that was 3 percentage points higher for the 2024 general election, that would equate to **54,000 additional voters** casting a ballot.

Endnotes

- 1 Greta Bedekovics, "Pass the Freedom to Vote Act: How Elections Would Look Different This Year and in the Future" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2024), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/pass-the-freedom-to-vote-act-how-elections-would-look-different-this-year-and-in-the-future/>; Freedom to Vote Act, S. 2747, 117th Cong., 1st sess. (September 14, 2021), available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/2747>.
- 2 Ballotpedia, "West Virginia elections, 2018," available at https://ballotpedia.org/West_Virginia_elections_2018 (last accessed October 2024); Ballotpedia, "West Virginia gubernatorial election, 2016," available at https://ballotpedia.org/West_Virginia_gubernatorial_election_2016 (last accessed October 2024).
- 3 Ballotpedia, "Same-day voter registration," available at https://ballotpedia.org/Same-day_voter_registration (last accessed October 2024); Ballotpedia, "West Virginia elections, 2018," available at https://ballotpedia.org/West_Virginia_elections_2018 (last accessed October 2024); Ballotpedia, "West Virginia gubernatorial election, 2016," available at https://ballotpedia.org/West_Virginia_gubernatorial_election_2016 (last accessed October 2024).
- 4 Jacob M. Grumbach and Charlotte Hill, "Rock the Registration: Same Day Registration Increases Turnout of Young Voters," *The Journal of Politics* 84 (1) (2022): 405–417, available at <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/714776?journalCode=jop>; Paul Taylor and others, "American Mobility: Who Moves? Who Stays Put? Where's Home?" (Washington: Pew Research Center, 2008), available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2010/10/Movers-and-Stayers.pdf>; Hire A Helper, "32+ Key Moving Statistics You Should Know in 2023," available at <https://www.hireahelper.com/moving-statistics/> (last accessed October 2024); U.S. Census Bureau, "Current Population Survey Data Tables, 2022," available at https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/data/tables.2022.List_1020932829.html#list-tab-List_1020932829 (last accessed October 2024).
- 5 Michael Waldman, "Mass Purges are the New Voter Suppression," Brennan Center for Justice, March 12, 2024, available at <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/mass-purges-are-new-voter-suppression>; Megan Henry, "Ohio's voter purge 'disproportionately targets voters of color', civil rights organizations say," *Ohio Capital Journal*, July 25, 2024, available at <https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2024/07/25/ohios-voter-purge-disproportionately-targets-voters-of-color-civil-rights-organizations-say/>.
- 6 Grumbach and Hill, "Rock the Registration: Same Day Registration Increases Turnout of Young Voters."
- 7 Vote.org, "Absentee Ballot Rules," available at <https://www.vote.org/absentee-voting-rules/> (last accessed October 2024); National Conference of State Legislatures, "Table 1: States with No-Excuse Absentee Voting," available at <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/table-1-states-with-no-excuse-absentee-voting> (last accessed October 2024).
- 8 Maya Eaglin and Nidhi Sharma, "West Virginia has one of the country's worst voter turnout records. Will this election be different?," *NBC News*, August 31, 2024, available at <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/west-virginia-low-voter-turnout-rcna167866>; New Hampshire Secretary of State, "Voter Turnout Rankings of States:1996-2020 Presidential Elections, Based on Vote for Highest Office Divided by Voting Age Population (VAP) AFTER National Voter Registration Act of 1993," available at <https://www.sos.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt561/files/documents/2022-04/voter-turnout-charts-4-19-21.pdf> (last accessed October 2024).