



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

By Greta Bedekovics, Sydney Bryant, and Alice Lillydahl | October 2, 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 more than 19 million voting-age Texas citizens, of which more than 12.4 million 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 Texas, 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 2020 Texas presidential election was decided by 631,000 voters, and the 2018 Texas U.S. Senate election was decided by just 215,000 voters.²

631,000

voters decided the 2020 Texas presidential election

215,000

voters decided the 2018 Texas U.S. Senate election

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

Automatic voter registration

The FTVA would ensure eligible Texas citizens can automatically register to vote through the Department of Motor Vehicles.³ Automatic voter registration (AVR) has been shown to be critical not only for registering voters and keeping voter rolls up to date but also for closing racial gaps in voter registration rates. Given the measured impacts that AVR has had in other states:

- Approximately **1.7 million Texans** likely would have newly registered to vote through AVR, including approximately 312,000 Hispanic Texans and 278,000 Black Texans.
- Approximately **2.1 million already registered Texas voters** likely would have updated their voter registration information using AVR ahead of the 2024 general election.
- Nearly **823,000 additional Texas voters** would likely cast a ballot in the 2024 general election, including approximately 150,000 Hispanic Texans and 134,000 Black Texans.

Same-day voter registration

The FTVA would ensure eligible Texas citizens can register to vote at the polls on Election Day and during an early voting period.⁴ 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.⁵ Additionally, SDR helps mitigate issues with inaccurate voter roll purges that often disproportionately affect voters of color.⁶ 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.⁷ Given these findings:

- Nearly **294,000 additional Hispanic voters** would likely cast a ballot if voter turnout for Texas Hispanic voters was at the same rate as for Hispanic voters in states with SDR.
- As many as **166,000 more young Texans**—those ages 18 to 24—would likely cast a ballot in the 2024 general election.

Online voter registration

Texas is among seven states that still do not offer online voter registration (OVR)—38 years after federal tax filing first became available online and 17 years after the release of the first iPhone.⁸ OVR saves states approximately \$3.54 per voter registration application, with the average election office spending \$113,445 on staff time alone to process paper registration forms.⁹ Given these findings:

- Over the past three federal election cycles, OVR would have saved Texas approximately **\$16.5 million and thousands of staff hours** across more than 250 election jurisdictions.¹⁰

Re-enfranchisement

The FTVA would restore the right to vote for returning citizens who have served time for felony sentences. Black Americans are incarcerated at five times the rate of white Americans, while Hispanic/Latino Americans are incarcerated at nearly two-and-a-half times the rate of white Americans.¹¹

- As many as **312,000 Texans** could have regained their right to vote and become eligible to cast a ballot for the 2024 general election, including 80,000 Black Texans and 112,000 Hispanic/Latino Texans.¹²

Voting by mail

The FTVA would ensure that all Texas voters can request a mail-in ballot.¹³ 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 **2.3 million Texans** who have participated in elections would likely cast their ballot by mail instead of in person for the 2024 general election.
- **1.2 million additional voters** would likely cast a ballot in the 2024 general election if voter turnout in Texas increased by 6.7 percentage points, mirroring higher turnouts seen in no-excuse states.

Ballot drop boxes

The FTVA would ensure Texans 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 **270 drop boxes** would be available to voters across Texas.
- More than **630,000 Texas voters** would likely return their ballot to a drop box.

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, "Presidential election in Texas, 2020," available at https://ballotpedia.org/Presidential_election_in_Texas_2020 (last accessed September 2024); Ballotpedia, "Texas elections, 2018," available at https://ballotpedia.org/Texas_elections_2018 (last accessed September 2024).
- 3 National Conference of State Legislatures, "Automatic Voter Registration," available at <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/automatic-voter-registration> (last accessed September 2024); Movement Advancement Project, "Automatic Voter Registration," available at https://www.lgbtmap.org/democracy-maps/automatic_voter_registration (last accessed September 2024).
- 4 Ballotpedia, "Same-day voter registration," available at https://ballotpedia.org/Same-day_voter_registration (last accessed September 2024).
- 5 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 September 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 September 2024).
- 6 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/>.
- 7 Grumbach and Hill, "Rock the Registration: Same Day Registration Increases Turnout of Young Voters."
- 8 Movement Advancement Project, "Online Voter Registration," available at https://www.lgbtmap.org/democracy-maps/online_voter_registration (last accessed September 2024); IRS, "IRS E-File: A History," Press release, June 2011, available at <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-news/fs-11-10.pdf>.
- 9 Vote.org, "Modernizing voter registration is an easy call for cost savings," available at <https://www.vote.org/blog/modernizing-voter-registration-is-an-easy-call-for-cost-savings/> (last accessed July 2024); U.S. Election Assistance Commission, "Election Administration and Voting Survey 2022 Comprehensive Report" (Washington: 2023), available at https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/2023-06/2022_EAVS_Report_508c.pdf.
- 10 Office of the Texas Secretary of State, "VoteTexas.Gov," available at <https://www.votetexas.gov/mobile/voting/voting-in-person.htm> (last accessed September 2024).
- 11 NAACP, "Criminal Justice Fact Sheet," available at <https://naacp.org/resources/criminal-justice-fact-sheet> (last accessed September 2024); Lauren-Brooke Eisen and Hernandez D. Stroud, "The Federal Government Must Incentivize States to Incarcerate Fewer People," Brennan Center for Justice, March 14, 2023, available at <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/federal-government-must-incentivize-states-incarcerate-fewer-people#:~:text=Black%20Americans%20are%20incarcerated%20in,incarceration%20rate%20of%20white%20people>.
- 12 Christopher Uggen and others, "Locked Out 2022: Estimates of People Denied Voting Rights" (Washington: The Sentencing Project, 2022), available at <https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/locked-out-2022-estimates-of-people-denied-voting-rights/>.
- 13 Vote.org, "Absentee Ballot Rules," available at <https://www.vote.org/absentee-voting-rules/> (last accessed September 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 September 2024).