

# **An Examination of the Tension Between the Accessibility and Integrity of Arizona Elections**

*Understanding Arizona and the United States' voting procedures and carving a path forward*

**Joe Pitts**, program director of the Arizona Junior Fellows; **Taylor Hersch**, Arizona Junior Fellows class of 2020-2021; **Stephen Matter**, Arizona Junior Fellows class of 2020-2021

## ***Introduction***

Elections serve as the primary procedural tool to ensure legitimate government within the United States' republican form of government. Legitimate government in the United States derives its just powers from the consent of the governed. In order to bridge the gap between the people and the legitimate government to which they consent, elections must not only establish and organize voting as the most direct means to participation in government, but also as the most accessible and licensed means to democracy. While both sides of the contemporary American political spectrum agree that free and fair elections are essential to the Republic, a tension exists between the differing political means to achieving these ends.

This tension relies on the notion that Republicans -- or right-leaning voters -- prioritize the integrity of elections while those on the left -- typified by the Democratic Party -- prioritize the importance of accessible elections. While this understanding is brief and susceptible to broad overgeneralizations, it is a good starting point for conceptualizing the debate at hand. This is not a new debate nor is it a new tension between parties. [Article 1 Section 4](#) of the United States Constitution affords Congress and state legislatures the power to regulate the "Times, places and manner of holding elections." In 1870, the [first federal statute](#) concerning the integrity of elections was passed in order to enforce the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution's racial discrimination protections regarding suffrage rights for minority groups.

According to the [Cornell Legal Information Institute](#), "Under the Enforcement Act of 1870, and subsequent laws, false registration, bribery, voting without legal right, making false returns of votes cast, interference in any manner with officers of election, and the neglect by any such officer of any duty required of him by state or federal law were made federal offenses." These pieces of American Reconstruction legislation were passed with the intent of securing both the accessibility of voting for all eligible American voters and the integrity of the election system.

As the Reconstruction continued, national support for the effort dwindled. Within one decade of the end of the U.S. Civil War, the resurgence of certain interests in American politics led Congress to the repeal of some of the provisions relating to election integrity and ballot access. Congress enacted bills in the following decades that sought to find a balance between the laws that ensure integrity and those that encourage a more accessible election system. Nonetheless, it should be noted that overtly discriminatory voting practices continued until the repeal of many of these laws under the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Some of the practices employed by local and state officials, particularly throughout the American South, included poll taxes, literacy tests, and

grandfather clauses (these excluded descendants of slaves from voting, but were [repealed](#) by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1915). These sorts of regulations, which were enacted with the intent of discouraging and reducing the number of specifically Black Americans from voting, are fresh in the minds of many voting rights advocates today.

Today, Arizona has found itself at the center of this age-old debate as [one of four](#) states to put forth new voting legislation following the 2020 election; an election which sparked renewed national debate over the integrity and accessibility of American elections. Some on the political right are skeptical of Democratic efforts to block or repeal further election regulation, as they believe this would leave the door open for election fraud. Conversely, many on the political left are angered regarding [proposed legislation](#) that would mandate periodic updates to the Permanent Early Voting List and enhance voter identification requirements for mail-in ballots. The concern for Democrats lies in the potential for such election laws to curb voter turnout for groups that may not have the required proof of ID or the means to acquire one.

Major ethical questions that follow include:

- Is it wrong to ask people to identify themselves at polling locations if their name is already on the polling list?
- Should a form of identification be required when voters return their mail-in ballots?
- While some forms of election regulation inherently have potential to affect voter turnout, we must ask, firstly, which forms of regulation (voter ID requirements, signature verification, mail-in ballot requirements, the voter registration process, etc.) are most likely to negatively affect ballot accessibility, and secondly, to what extent may we measure the effect of these requirements to vote?

The purpose of this paper is twofold: 1) to provide a proper examination of the aforementioned questions within the context of United States and Arizona politics, and 2) to give substance to the claim that the tension between ballot accessibility and election integrity is not necessarily insurmountable. Data presented in various peer reviewed scholarly research papers from students and professors at Princeton, the University of Delaware, Tufts University, the University of Chicago and other institutions of higher learning illustrate how accessibility and integrity are not mutually exclusive.

### ***The Voting Rights Act and preclearance***

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed by Congress to ensure state and local governments did not have the ability to pass laws or policies that deny American citizens the equal right to vote based on their race. The Voting Rights Act contained many provisions, but one of the most contentious components was Section 5, which established the practice of preclearance in the United States. This required 16 states and additional jurisdiction with a history of discrimination to submit any proposed changes in voting procedures to the U.S. Department of Justice or a three-judge panel of the United States District Court for District of Columbia.

The U.S. Supreme Court case [Shelby County v. Holder](#) in 2013 struck down Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. The Court ruled that the doctrine of preclearance was unconstitutional, along with a formula in Section 4(b) of the Voting Rights Act, which determined which states and political subdivisions qualified for preclearance.

The “divide” between accessibility and the integrity of elections has been contested for decades, and the *Shelby* case illustrates that it spans the legislative and judicial domains.

### ***Where the system stands today***

In approximately one-third of states in the country, there is a requirement that those not voting in person must provide a reason for their inability to do so. The voting process in states throughout the country can look vastly different in terms of in-person, mail-in, and absentee voting. It varies by state, by county, and by locality.

The current signature verification process for absentee and mail-in ballots varies widely between states. The most common requirements are that the signature or ballot is notarized or that there is an additional signature on the envelope containing the returned ballot. Thirty-two states require that the signature is verified by comparing it with the signature that they have on file. Twenty-eight of these states and the District of Columbia allow for the voter to [remedy any mismatches](#). The process of remedying the mismatch will start with the official reaching out to the voter and explain the situation and verify the information and that the voter did cast a ballot.

Amber McReynolds, CEO of the National Vote at Home Institute [said](#) that signature matching “is the best way to strike a balance between security, transparency, and accessibility for voters.” The process of signature verification is done by election officials and temporary election workers.

Regarding in-person voting requirements, 32 states currently require some type of identification to be presented at the time of voting at the polling place.

### ***Determining which Arizona voting laws have measurable potential to affect ballot accessibility***

An integral part of this investigation involves determining which forms of voting regulation might meaningfully hinder ballot access. Following the 2020 election, legislation surrounding voting has received intense scrutiny, with a focus on how such bills might inhibit certain communities from equal access to voting.

Since the 2020 election, Arizona has debated several bills that could affect the voter registration and the voting process in the state. In 2021, the Legislature passed and Gov. Ducey signed [SB 1485](#), which removes voters from the Permanent Early Voter List if they have not participated in

elections via early voting ballots in the past two primary and general election cycles. Voters removed from the Early Voting List would remain on the voter rolls, however.

One of the most contested bills was SB 1713, authored by State Senator J.D. Mesnard. SB 1713 failed 31-29 in the State House in 2021. The bill would have required the same standard for identification required for in-person voting as for mail-in voting. This means that those who choose to vote by mail-in would have had to supply:

1. The identifying number from their Voter's Arizona driver's license, Arizona nonoperating identification license, tribal enrollment card or other form of tribal identification or a copy of a United States federal, state or local government issued identification.
2. The voter's voter registration number and an item that contains the name and address of the voter that reasonably appears to be the same as the voter's voter registration address, including a copy of a utility bill, a bank or credit union statement that is dated within ninety days of the date of the election, a valid Arizona Vehicle registration, an Arizona vehicle insurance card, an Indian census card, tribal enrollment card or other form of tribal identification, a property tax statement, a recorder's certificate, a voter registration card or any other mailing that is labeled as "Official Election Material".

Certain voting requirements such as voter identification, restrictions on universal mail-in ballots, and the imposition of voter registration deadlines have been identified as those that have the highest potential to restrict voters from casting their vote. [Voter suppression](#) has been said to occur in the United States due to "Polling place reductions or consolidations," "Harsh voter registration compliance deadlines," "Inadequate numbers of functioning machines, optical scanners, or electronic polling books," "proof of citizenship laws," etc., however, most politicians are not citing the above scenarios as the most detrimental to ballot accessibility following the 2020 election.

[CNN](#) published an article expressing concern over newly proposed Arizona legislation, citing a proposed mandate that would update the state's Permanent Early Voting List and one that would require photo verification for mail-in ballots instead of relying on the current signature verification system. The article also mentioned other [proposed legislation](#) that specifies legal punishment for those who "knowingly cause, procure or allow [themselves] to be registered as an elector of any county, city, town, district or precinct, knowing that [they are] not entitled to such registration." [The New York Times](#) and [NBC News](#) published similar articles that received national attention. Arizona already requires either a driver's license, a U.S. federal, state, or local government-issued ID, issued with printed name and address, an Arizona ID card, or a tribal enrollment card or other form of tribal ID for in-person voting.

The cited articles help to determine which Arizona laws and newly proposed legislation most directly fall on the "fine line" between ensuring election integrity and obstructing ballot accessibility. However, not all of the current statutes and proposed legislation can be measured in terms of their effect on voter integrity and ballot accessibility. For example, an examination of [Arizona SB 1485](#), which involves updating the Permanent Early Voting List, is limited to theoretical and conditional arguments. For instance, one cannot measure the number of people

who will not vote in future elections because they were removed from the PEVL due to their failure to vote by mail in previous elections consecutively and, therefore, won't be sent a mail-in ballot in the following election.

The bill, however, ensures that a voter who is soon to be removed from the Early Voting List would receive a notification of their impending removal and would be able to update their registration accordingly.

While voters can request to be placed back on the PEVL, one cannot gauge their psychological motivations for doing so or for not doing so after being removed. Additionally, proponents of SB 1485 have argued that the bill would stop people from fraudulently filling out the ballots of people who have changed residency, passed away, or who have decided not to vote. The same analytic limitations are still present, however, and it is virtually impossible to measure the number of fraudulent voters that this bill would stop.

On the other hand, there are some election laws that can be investigated further. Data is more easily collected surrounding voter ID laws and how they might deter some potential voters from the ballot box as well as how they might prevent fraudulent ballots from being counted.

Arizona already has specific ID requirements at the ballot box aimed at ensuring the integrity of elections by way of home address verification as well as a cross verification of name and photo identification with voting rolls.

In 2017, researchers and professors from The University of Chicago, Tufts University, The University of Pennsylvania and Princeton University issued a research paper titled "[\*Obstacles to estimating voter ID laws' effect on Turnout.\*](#)" The paper investigates the popular concern that voter ID laws suppress turnout among racial and ethnic minorities. The researchers argue that current empirical evaluations of such laws are impeded by issues with administrative records and election data. The paper begins by addressing the problem of isolating the effect of Voter ID laws. Currently, across the nation, 85 to 95 percent of the national voting eligible population already possess photo identification. This high percentage of people who hold valid photo identification makes it difficult to properly isolate the lack of turnout from those who do not hold ID in over-time comparisons.

Studies that purport that voter ID laws lead to a notable and measurable decrease in ballot accessibility within U.S. elections primarily utilize data from Cooperative Congressional Election Studies (CCES). The CCES is a consortium of 39 universities that developed a large-scale academic survey project for the purpose of examining and adding context to the outcomes of midterm and general elections.

An [\*article\*](#) written in 2017 titled *Voter Identification Laws and the Suppression of Minority Votes*, uses CCES data to show that strict voter ID laws cause a large turnout decline among minorities, including among Latinos, who "are 10 [percentage points] less likely to turn out in general elections in states with strict ID laws than in states without strict ID regulations, all else equal." However, the process in which CCES data is used to calculate this number is flawed and simply asks too much of CCES data in overtime state level comparisons.

Conversely, the Obstacles paper provides deeper analysis and a proof-of-concept test using CCES data to calculate voter turnout of minority groups in states prior to the enactment of voter ID laws. Most simply put, the researchers tested if the process used to prove the negative effects of voter ID laws could be used to show higher relative turnout for minorities in states prior to the enactment of voter ID laws. When tested in this way, it is found that the process failed to show higher relative turnout levels for minorities prior to the enactment of stricter voter ID laws. The authors go further, [explaining](#) that, “This additional analysis asks too much of the CCES data, which is designed to produce nationally representative samples each election year, not samples representative over time within states. In fact, changes in CCES turnout data over time within states bear little relationship to actual turnout changes within states.”

This research can be used to explain why some findings that found voter ID laws to have detrimental impacts on minority voter turnout deviate substantially from many other published findings that show little to zero effect. An important key to understanding how research pointing towards voter ID laws’ negative effect on minority voter turnout has been refuted is the difference-in-differences model that the paper applies. In order to develop a proper control data set, differences between states that have strict voter ID laws and those states that do not have such laws must be observed. In this way, the paper uncovers a baseline that was previously unobserved in the article *Voter Identification Laws and the Suppression of Minority Votes*, showing that changes in CCES turnout data over time within states does not correlate with actual turnout changes within states.

The Obstacles paper even goes so far as to say, “The difference-in-differences model yields results that, if taken as true, would actually refute the claim that voter ID laws suppress turnout.” This conclusion asserts that the standard technique using national survey data is ineffective at measuring the impact of strict voter ID laws on minority voter turnout.

## ***Legal perspective***

Prior to 2013, the Section 5 of the VRA (Voting Rights Act) required certain states and political subdivisions to acquire federal authorization before enacting any changes to their election processes. Section 4(b) of the same legislation served as the formula that determined which states would have to abide by Section 5.

States that had previously instituted voting tests as of November 1, 1964 and who had less than 50 percent turnout for the 1964 presidential election, under Section 5, had to abide by this federal policy of preclearance.

As a result of the Shelby decision involving the striking down of the VRA’s Sections 5 and 4(b), both state and federal courts no longer see charges brought forth under Section 5 of the VRA. Instead, suits concerning election laws are filed under [Section 2](#) of the VRA, which prohibits voting practices that discriminate on the basis of race, color, or affiliation. Because of this, the courts now serve as a battleground between those who seek to ensure election integrity through

stricter voting processes and those who wish to repeal such legislation due to its potential to limit ballot accessibility for minority groups.

## **Applying Section 2**

Recently, the Democratic National Committee challenged two of Arizona's voting laws. One was the "out-of-precinct" policy, which prohibits provisional ballots from being counted if they weren't cast at a voter's designated polling place. The second is House Bill 2023, which became law in 2016 and "makes it a crime for any person other than a postal worker, an election official, or a voter's caregiver, family member, or household member to knowingly collect an early ballot." The legislation was aimed at curtailing a process called "[ballot harvesting](#)," which "involves [laws] that allow third parties to collect and deliver ballots in some states."

The case, [Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee](#), more broadly concerns the application of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act to one of Arizona's state statutes regulating voting procedure.

The U.S. Supreme Court issued a [6-3 decision](#) in *Brnovich v. DNC* July 1, 2021, upholding the Arizona voting laws. In the majority opinion, authored by Justice Samuel Alito, the court said, "Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act provides vital protection against discriminatory voting rules, and no one suggests that discrimination in voting has been extirpated or that the threat has been eliminated. But the Section does not deprive the States of their authority to establish non-discriminatory voting rules." The decision, in absence of providing a test to determine whether any law violates the Voting Rights Act, would instead provide "guideposts" which gives the court the ability to narrowly tailor the law in the future.

According to Justice Alito, relative to most other states, it is quite easy to vote in Arizona. Voters may cast their ballots on Election Day at either a traditional voter precinct polling place or at a voting center, and before Election Day by way of an "early ballot" submitted by mail or at a designated early voting location in each county. Arizona requires no explanation for mail-in ballots – they are universally accessible by all Arizonans who are eligible to vote in the state.

## **Disenfranchisement and ballot harvesting**

Opponents of ballot harvesting worry that the practice might result in fraud or disenfranchisement that could negatively affect any political party. Indeed, the results of the North Carolina 9th Congressional District race in 2018 were overturned because a Republican political operative collected hundreds of mail-in ballots from disproportionately Democratic neighborhoods and never brought them to a polling place. The election's margin was slim, and the outstanding ballots had the potential to change the election's result.

Disenfranchisement can also occur as a result of voter fraud. If a certain number of fraudulent ballots are added to the tally, all of the remaining ballots cast by legitimate voters are having their votes diluted.

In *Brnovich v. DNC*, the DNC and others alleged that HB 2023 was in violation of Section 2 of the VRA. The DNC [argued](#) that "The state's refusal to count ballots cast in the wrong precinct and its ballot-collection restriction had an adverse and disparate effect on the State's American

Indian, Hispanic, and African-American citizens in violation of §2 of the VRA.” Additionally, the DNC argued the ballot-collection restriction was in violation of Section 2 of the VRA because it was “enacted with discriminatory intent”.

### **Alito’s five-factor test**

Justice Samuel Alito’s opinion of the court, Justice Neil Gorsuch’s concurring opinion, and the dissent from Justice Elena Kagan illustrate the tension between ballot accessibility and election integrity.

Justice Alito begins his opinion by acknowledging the history of discriminatory voter restrictions such as poll taxes, literacy tests, property qualifications, as well as “White Primaries” and “grandfather clauses.” In his opinion, Justice Alito uses the aforementioned examples of discriminatory election regulation and his comprehensive understanding of Section 2 of the VRA as a baseline from which to judge the current Arizona statutes. He argues that the plaintiffs failed to prove the statutes’ “disparate impact on the opportunities of minority voters to [vote].”

Justice Alito explains how Section 2 of the VRA specifically requires a “consideration of the totality of circumstances” when being applied to election regulations. He states, “Thus any circumstance that has a logical bearing on whether voting is equally open and affords equal opportunity may be considered.”

Alito proposes [five factors](#) that could be used as a legal test for judging such applications of Section 2 in the future.

The first factor to consider is the extent of the burden that is imposed by a contested voting regulation. This factor requires an equally open voting system that provides voters with equal opportunity to cast their ballots. This must be considered in context of what is known as “the usual burdens of voting,” which is defined in [Crawford v. Marion County Election Board](#). These “usual burdens” include the travel required to cast a ballot at either a precinct or mailbox and the compliance required to properly fill out a ballot.

The [second factor](#) to consider in the “totality of circumstances” concerns a proper comparison of the discrepancies between a challenged voting rule and the standard voting procedures that were instituted during the time when Section 2 was amended in 1982. Alito explains that “because every voting rule imposes a burden of some sort, it is useful to have benchmarks with which the burdens imposed by a challenged rule can be compared.”

The [third factor](#) concerns the “disparities in a rule’s impact on members of different racial or ethnic groups.”

In his fourth factor, Justice Alito explains that the courts must also consider all of the opportunities afforded by a state's election system when weighing the burden imposed by a contested state statute. For example, a state that provides multiple avenues to vote will be impacted less by an election restriction applied to in-person voting than a state that only offers in person voting. Justice Alito explains, “Thus, where a state provides multiple ways to vote, any



burden imposed on voters who choose one of the available options cannot be evaluated without also taking into account the other available means.”

The final factor considers the interests of the state and how they would be served by a victory in the courts. The impetus for the adoption of an election rule, and its relation to state interests, must be considered by the courts.

Justice Alito’s examination of the “totality of circumstances” surrounding Arizona’s election regulations offers a defense for an election law aimed at ensuring election integrity without illegally impacting ballot accessibility in a manner that disproportionately affects minorities or in a manner that is overly burdensome to the electoral process. Alito’s “totality of circumstances” test provides legal justification for the two Arizona election laws challenged in *Brnovich v. DNC* and shows how the tension between ballot accessibility and election integrity can be seemingly tamed. However, that is not a consensus shared by all members of the court and it is certainly not an opinion shared by the whole public.

### **The dissent**

Justice Kagan argues that the majority in *Brnovich v. DNC* applies Section 2 of the VRA far too narrowly, subsequently undermining the Act’s capacity to ensure the protection of marginalized voters. She reasons that the 1982 benchmark factors which Justice Alito uses to apply Section 2 of the VRA are outdated.

In order to pinpoint where exactly Kagan and Alito fundamentally disagree, it must be determined which key phrases are being applied differently by the two justices.

Section 2 (b) of the Voter Rights Act holds that “a violation .... is established if, based on the totality of circumstances, it is shown that the political processes leading to the nomination or election in the state or political subdivision are not equally open to participation by members of a class of citizens protected by subsection (a) in that its members have less opportunity than other members of the electorate to participate in the political process and to elect representatives of their choice.”

Kagan fundamentally disagrees with Alito’s interpretation of Section 2 (b)’s “totality of circumstances” requirement.

Kagan disputes two key concepts that she believes to be faulty interpretations underpinning Justice Alito’s written opinion. Firstly, Justice Kagan’s explication of the concepts “equally open” and “less opportunity”, present in Section 2 (b), differs from the majority opinion.

While Justice Alito performs the totality of circumstances inquiry judging an election law’s effect on the openness and accessibility of the political process within the context of the entire election system, Justice Kagan prefers a more traditional “intensely local appraisal.” This is to say that Justice Kagan is not likely to give merit to the general openness of Arizona’s election system as a cause to offset the potential of an individual election law to disproportionately affect certain voters. The traditional approach relies on [a list of factors](#) identified by the U.S. Senate when the VRA was amended in 1982.

Justices Alito and Kagan disagree both on (1) what “equally open” and “less opportunity” mean in practice, and (2) how to perform the totality of circumstances inquiry.

Others argue that the ruling in *Brnovich v. DNC* unequally distributes the burden of proof. Its interpretation of the VRA requires plaintiffs to substantiate, in a quantitative manner, their allegation that a specific law is negatively affecting the voter turnout of minority groups. At the same time, defendants (state and local governments which implement certain election laws) are not required to substantiate the need for new election laws with evidence of voter fraud or other similar activities that implemented reforms would be implemented to correct.

Those who concur with the majority opinion argue that a state or local government can institute an election law that solves a problem that has yet to arise or become a large issue. In other words, they argue that governments should be permitted to address legitimate concerns about election system vulnerabilities even if they’ve yet to be abused.

Justice Kagan, in her dissent, claims that “Wherever it can, the majority gives a cramped reading to broad language.” She goes further: “What is tragic here is that the Court has (yet again) rewritten—in order to weaken—a statute that stands as a monument to America’s greatness, and protects against its basest impulses.”

Her dissent posits that some of the new voting regulations established by certain states and political subdivisions passed into law following *Shelby v. Holder* would not be approved if Section 5 of the VRA were still in effect. Acknowledging the court’s recognition of Section 5 as unconstitutional, Kagan says that “after Shelby County, Section 2 is what voters have left.”

This disagreement between Alito and Kagan brings out the foundational tension between voter integrity and ballot access. While all sides may agree that racial discrimination is wrong, and that on some level voting should be accessible and free from fraud, they disagree on how these terms are defined and how governments should go about achieving these ends. The tension between these principles may never be fully reconciled, but common ground and consensus are possible.

## ***Finding Common Ground***

### **Room for substantive elections reform**

In response to the 2020 election, both Republicans and Democrats have proposed a wide array of reforms to the American elections process. While Republican proposals have been much more state-focused, which is likely a result of the U.S. House, Senate, and presidency being controlled by the Democratic Party, Democrats have looked towards sweeping federal, state, and local election reforms.

Republicans across the nation have introduced several reforms to their state processes, including:

- Banning the use of electronic tabulation equipment;

- Making mail-in voting procedures more rigorous (such as expanded signature verification measures; requiring that voters must mail their ballots a certain number of days before an election is conducted, etc.);
- Ensuring that all voters are required to provide voter identification prior to casting a ballot (drivers' license, passport, last 4 digits of one's Social Security Number, etc.);
- Expanding in-person early voting.

Georgia's Election Integrity Act of 2021 is the most substantive measure Republicans have drafted and passed on the issue of elections processes since the 2020 election. The Act includes many of the above reforms and has been criticized by Democrats as conducive to "voter suppression." Some, including President Joe Biden, have [labeled](#) the bill the "New Jim Crow," referring to the post-Civil War American South's restrictive anti-Black elections laws that purposely restricted marginalized communities' ability to participate in elections. Republicans, and some academics, have [refuted](#) these claims.

Democrats' reforms are encapsulated in H.R.1, an enormous national elections reform package, which includes many notable provisions (listed below are provisions specifically related to elections processes, though the bill includes much more):

- Mandates that all states institute automatic and same-day voter registration;
- Puts strict limits on how states how states conduct voter roll "purges" (states occasionally clean their voter rolls to ensure that there are no ineligible voters still on their rolls, but Democrats express concern such maintenance could disenfranchise certain voters);
- Mandates that all states establish independent Congressional redistricting commissions;
- Allows further cooperation between federal intelligence authorities and state elections officials.

While right-leaning voices and left-leaning folks have many disagreements regarding elections law, the overarching tension between their perspectives can be summarized as an emphasis on voting integrity being pitted against an emphasis on voter access. Republicans are concerned about voting laws being so loose so as to be conducive to fraud, and Democrats are concerned about restrictive voting regulations that may disenfranchise voters who have a right to express themselves at the ballot box.

Ideally a discussion on election law would leave out such a partisan framework, unfortunately this debate is polarized along partisan lines. The partisan framework in which this debate occurs must be acknowledged.

### **Synthesizing integrity and access**

This tension may seem insurmountable, but this paper has endeavored to show that perhaps both interests – integrity and access – can be reconciled. Republicans and Democrats both largely agree on the following:

- Everyone who is eligible to vote should have the opportunity to vote;
- Democratic elections are an integral component of the American system;
- Fraudulent votes should not be counted;

- Americans should have faith in their elections and their legitimacy.

While solutions which are amicable to both sides will vary by state, a reform that could be considered in Arizona is:

- **Expanding civics education in schools with an emphasis on providing students with an adequate understanding of America and Arizona's voting processes:** A proper understanding of elections and civics can only further the interests of voters and the state, particularly considering that such a policy would expand the public's education surrounding voting processes, institutions that handle elections, and the avenues by which citizens can express themselves democratically.

Beyond this potential reform, there is also much more room for further research on this topic. Several questions that researchers, data analysts, and political scientists should explore further include:

- To what extent do voter identification laws disproportionately impact marginalized communities?
- How accurate can signature verification processes for mail-in ballots be to ensure that little to no fraudulent ballots are cast?
- To what extent are eligible voters who do not have a valid form of voter identification dissuaded from receiving identification due to cost or some other barrier?
- How can the elections process be made more transparent without sacrificing the integrity of the secret ballot?

Striking a balance between legitimate interests amid such a polarizing political environment may seem daunting, but such compromise and agreement is especially necessary when public trust in elections is so low and the mutual ties of affection that bound a people are fraught.

While the recommendations of this paper are informed by research and analysis, they are by no means exhaustive. The authors of this paper welcome input and engagement with the topics covered.

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