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FROM THE POLLS

Republican Support for Voting Rights Drops

38%
of Republicans support automatic voter registration.

82%
of Democrats support the measure.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The political divide in America has grown so wide that it now extends well beyond questions of policy.

People's feelings on how democracy ought to be carried out — including whether voting should be made harder or easier — may now be just as likely to be correlated to their political identity as they are to their views on actual political issues.

That is the message coming from a Pew Research Center poll released on Thursday, which finds that Republicans increasingly oppose measures that would expand access to the ballot — particularly those that former President Donald J. Trump frequently complained about during the 2020 campaign.

The percentage of Republicans and right-leaning independents who said voters should be able to vote early or absentee without a reason plummeted, to 38 percent in the new poll, from 57 percent three years ago.

Until the most recent election cycle, when Mr. Trump drummed up opposition to absentee and early voting in an attempt to improve his electoral chances, those methods were largely seen as being at least as beneficial to Republican candidates as to Democrats.

The decrease in Republican support has driven a drop of eight percentage points in overall support for universal no-excuse early voting. Still, 63 percent of all Americans remain in favor of it.

Republican support for automatic voter registration for citizens also dropped, to 38 percent, an 11-point dip since 2018. Among Democrats and Democratic leaners, 82 percent

said they supported the practice.

Establishing automatic voter registration and requiring states to hold early voting for at least two weeks are elements of H.R. 1, the For the People Act, a sweeping voting-rights bill that was passed last month by the Democrat-controlled House. It would need at least 10 Republican votes to pass in the Senate, support that's unlikely to materialize. Some congressional Democrats are now urging the party's leaders to shift their focus toward a narrower bill, the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, which had initially been proposed as a complement to H.R. 1.

But the Pew poll found that other proposals included in the For the People Act — like restoring voting rights to felons and making Election Day a national holiday — did retain the support of a solid majority in both parties, possibly a reflection of the fact that right-wing news media outlets haven't targeted those proposals for attacks as frequently as they have others.

Another particularly popular idea was to make early in-person voting standard (the poll question did not mention whether this kind of voting would be allowed without an excuse). Nearly four in five Americans supported making early voting available at least two weeks before Election Day, including 63 percent of Republicans and nine in 10 Democrats, the poll found.

The survey was conducted among 5,109 adults nationwide via Pew's American Trends Panel, which uses a probability-based model to draw a sample that is representative of the national population.

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