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Barriers to Voting for Older Americans: How States are Making it Harder for Seniors to Vote

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The right to vote is one of the fundamental pillars of our democracy, but that right is under attack for millions of older Americans across the nation. Attempts to limit voting locations, the length of early voting periods, inaccessible voting locations, and new strict voter identification (ID) laws threaten the hard won voting rights of older Americans.

KEY FINDINGS

- Since its founding, America has steadily expanded the right to vote through state law, federal law, and constitutional amendments.
- The right to vote and access to the polls have come under recent attack in ways not seen since prior to the passage of the *Voting Rights Act of 1965*.
- Various states have enacted suppressive voting laws under the guise of fighting voter fraud, a claim that has been thoroughly debunked.
- Suppressive voter laws, such as laws that require voter ID and limit access to polling locations, heavily impact older Americans.
 - Millions of older Americans do not maintain a current government ID, which is required to vote in many states, or do not have access to the documentation required to obtain a government ID.
 - Seniors are forced to travel longer distances to reach the polls due to poll closures – a sometimes insurmountable hurdle.
 - Some polling locations and ballots are not accessible for older Americans.
 - Limits to early voting and absentee ballots can prevent older Americans from casting a vote.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure the full authorization and empowerment of all federal voting laws, which will help facilitate older Americans' access to the polls.
- Provide access to the polls for older Americans by allowing opportunities for accessible early voting and absentee voting.
- Limit restrictions on voting and ensure election laws fully consider the needs and abilities of older Americans.