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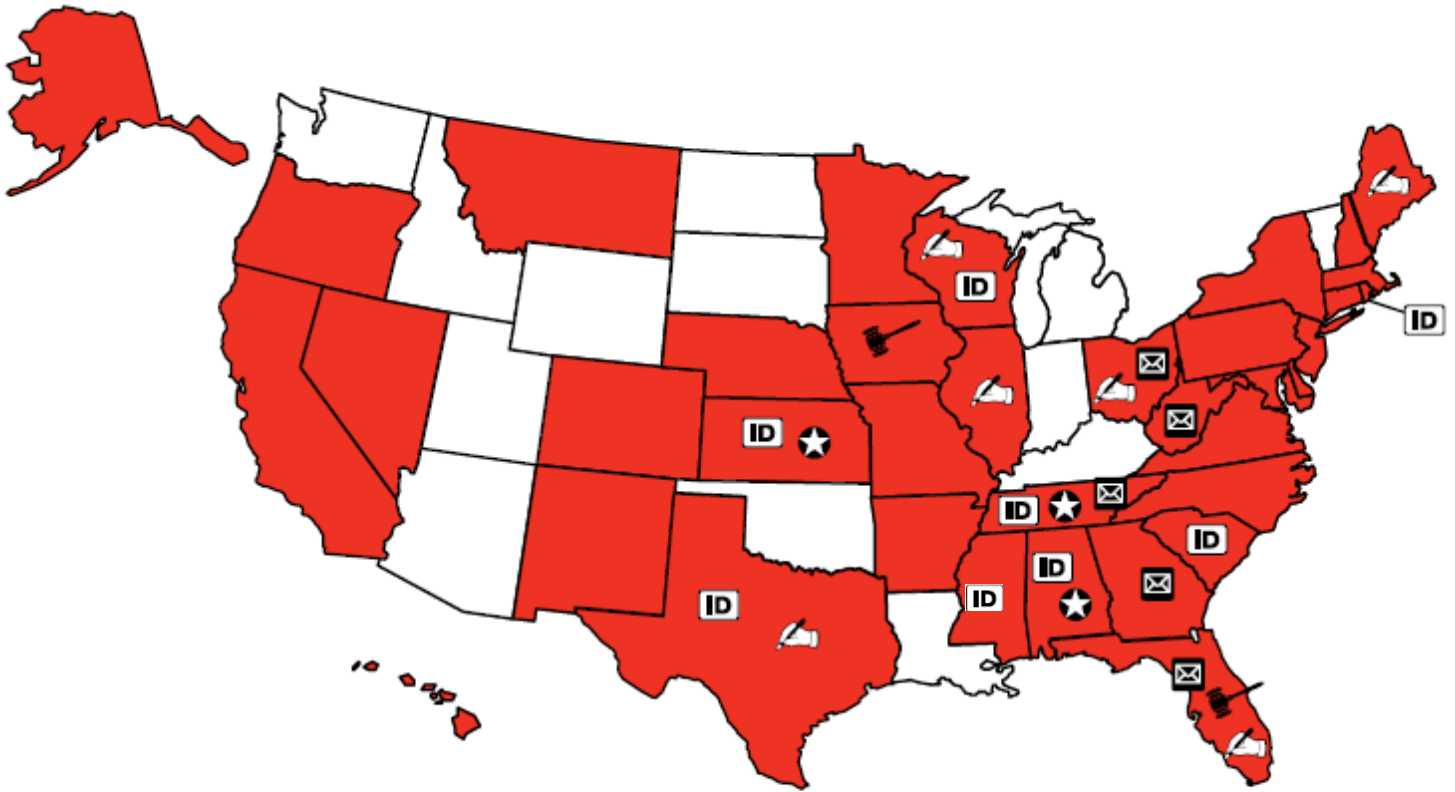
VOTING CHANGES IN 2012: A WAVE OF NEW LAWS







A shift that could change the electoral landscape is underway – the tightening of restrictions on who can vote and how. As a Brennan Center report, *Voting Law Changes in 2012*, discovered, these new laws could make it significantly harder for more than five million eligible voters to cast ballots in 2012.

- **Photo ID laws.** At least thirty-four states introduced legislation that would require voters to show photo identification in order to vote. Photo ID bills were signed into law in seven states—Alabama, Kansas, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin—and passed by referendum in Mississippi. By contrast, before the 2011 legislative session, only two states had ever imposed strict photo ID requirements. The number of states with laws requiring voters to show government-issued photo identification has quadrupled in 2011. To put this into context, 11 percent of American citizens do not possess a government-issued photo ID; that is over 21 million citizens.
- **Proof of citizenship laws.** At least twelve states introduced legislation that would require proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate, to register or vote. Proof of citizenship laws passed in Alabama, Kansas, and Tennessee. Previously, only two states had passed proof of citizenship laws, and only one had put such a requirement in effect. The number of states with such a requirement has more than doubled.
- **Making voter registration harder.** At least fourteen states introduced bills to end highly popular Election Day and same-day voter registration, limit voter registration mobilization efforts, and reduce other registration opportunities. Florida, Illinois and Texas passed laws restricting voter registration drives, and Florida and Wisconsin passed laws making it more difficult for people who move to stay registered and vote. Ohio ended its weeklong period of same-day voter registration, and the Maine legislature passed a law eliminating Election Day registration. Luckily, Maine voters later repealed the law.
- **Reducing early and absentee days.** At least nine states introduced bills to reduce their early voting periods, and four tried to reduce absentee voting opportunities. Florida, Georgia, Ohio, Tennessee, and West Virginia succeeded in enacting bills reducing early voting.
- **Making it harder to restore voting rights.** Two states—Florida and Iowa—reversed prior executive actions that made it easier for citizens with past felony convictions to restore their voting rights, affecting hundreds of thousands of voters. In effect, both states now permanently disenfranchise most citizens with past felony convictions.

Read the full report, *Voting Law Changes in 2012*,
by the Brennan Center's Wendy R. Weiser and Lawrence Norden at
www.brennancenter.org/votingchanges2012

STATES WHERE VOTING CHANGES WERE PURSUED AND TYPES OF CHANGES ENACTED



-  Legislation introduced
-  Photo ID requirements passed
-  Proof of citizenship passed
-  Restrictions on voter registration passed
-  Restrictions on early/absentee voting passed
-  Executive action making it harder to restore voting rights