

S 3309

Voter Empowerment Act of 2015

Congress: 114 (2015–2017, Ended)

Chamber: Senate

Policy Area: Government Operations and Politics

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Current Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

Latest Action: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration. (Sep 12, 2016)

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Sponsor

Name: Sen. Gillibrand, Kirsten E. [D-NY]

Party: Democratic • **State:** NY • **Chamber:** Senate

Cosponsors (12 total)

Cosponsor	Party / State	Role	Date Joined
Sen. Blumenthal, Richard [D-CT]	D · CT		Sep 12, 2016
Sen. Boxer, Barbara [D-CA]	D · CA		Sep 12, 2016
Sen. Brown, Sherrod [D-OH]	D · OH		Sep 12, 2016
Sen. Cardin, Benjamin L. [D-MD]	D · MD		Sep 12, 2016
Sen. Coons, Christopher A. [D-DE]	D · DE		Sep 12, 2016
Sen. Klobuchar, Amy [D-MN]	D · MN		Sep 12, 2016
Sen. Markey, Edward J. [D-MA]	D · MA		Sep 12, 2016
Sen. Merkley, Jeff [D-OR]	D · OR		Sep 12, 2016
Sen. Murphy, Christopher [D-CT]	D · CT		Sep 12, 2016
Sen. Sanders, Bernard [I-VT]	I · VT		Sep 12, 2016
Sen. Whitehouse, Sheldon [D-RI]	D · RI		Sep 12, 2016
Sen. Wyden, Ron [D-OR]	D · OR		Sep 12, 2016

Committee Activity

Committee	Chamber	Activity	Date
Rules and Administration Committee	Senate	Referred To	Sep 12, 2016

Subjects & Policy Tags

Policy Area:

Government Operations and Politics

Related Bills

Bill	Relationship	Last Action
114 HR 6072	Related bill	Sep 30, 2016: Referred to the Subcommittee on the Constitution and Civil Justice.
114 HR 12	Related bill	Apr 29, 2015: Referred to the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training.

Voter Empowerment Act of 2015

Voter Registration Modernization Act of 2015

Amends the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA) to require states to make available websites for online voter registration.

Authorizes automated voter registration of certain individuals and establishes other initiatives to promote voter registration, such as same-day registration and voter registration of individuals under 18 years of age.

Amends the federal criminal code to prohibit hindering, interfering with, or preventing voter registration.

Amends the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) to establish requirements for states to promote access to voter registration and voting for individuals with disabilities, including a single office for providing related information.

Directs the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to make grants for pilot programs enabling individuals with disabilities to register to vote and vote privately and independently at their own residences.

Reauthorizes the program of grants to state and local governments to assure voting access for individuals with disabilities.

Prohibits state or local election officials from preventing an individual from registering or voting in any federal election (voter caging), or from permitting a formal challenge under state law to an individual's registration status or eligibility to vote.

Prohibits a person from knowingly and willfully attempting to or depriving or defrauding the residents of a state of the right to vote by the communication of election-related information that is known to be materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent. Increases the penalty for voter intimidation.

Declares that the right of a U.S. citizen to vote in any federal election shall not be denied or abridged because of a criminal conviction unless he or she is serving a felony sentence in a correctional institution at the time of the election.

Requires each state to notify an individual convicted of a criminal offense under state law, upon release from state custody or upon sentence to probation, of the right to vote in a federal election.

Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act of 2015

Revises requirements for the audit capacity of voting systems, particularly those for a permanent paper record.

Requires the voting system to require the use of an individual, durable, voter-verified paper ballot of the voter's vote that shall be marked and made available for inspection by the voter before the vote is cast and counted, and which shall be counted by hand or read by an optical character recognition device or other counting device. Requires the system to provide an opportunity to correct any system-made error in the voter-verified paper ballot before it is permanently preserved.

Requires the National Science Foundation to make grants for the study and development of accessible ballot voting, verification, and casting mechanisms and devices and best practices to enhance the accessibility of paper ballot voting

and verification mechanisms for individuals with disabilities, those whose primary language is not English, and those with difficulties in literacy.

Requires each state, except when the winning candidate had no opponent or received 80% or more of the votes, to administer audits of federal election results, without advance notice, consisting of random hand counts of the voter-verified paper ballots.

Prohibits certification of election results until completion of audits.

Adds requirements for counting provisional ballots. Requires each state to allow early voting and facilitate voting by mail.

Amends the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to extend the guarantee of voting residency to family members of absent military personnel.

Revises absentee ballot procedures concerning applications, transmission, and overseas voters.

Entitles to leave a federal employee who serves as a poll worker.

Directs the EAC to make grants for poll-worker recruitment and training and develop materials for a model program.

Makes available to any person aggrieved by a violation of uniform and nondiscriminatory election technology and administration requirements the option to file a complaint with the Department of Justice (DOJ) or pursue a private right of action.

Amends the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to make it unlawful for a chief state election administration official, unless he or she or a family member is a candidate, to take an active part in political management or in a political campaign for federal office over which such official has supervisory authority.

Treats universities as voter registration agencies.

Establishes minimum notification requirements regarding voters affected by polling place changes.

Directs DOJ to: (1) coordinate the establishment of a state-based response system for responding to questions and complaints from individuals voting or seeking to vote, or registering to vote or seeking to, in federal elections; (2) establish and operate a toll-free telephone service to connect directly to such response system; and (3) appoint a Voter Hotline Task Force.

Makes NVRA and HAVA requirements applicable to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Reauthorizes and extends the EAC and repeals its exemption from certain contracting requirements.

Actions Timeline

- **Sep 12, 2016:** Introduced in Senate
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