

Who Votes Without Identification? Using Affidavits from Michigan to Learn About the Potential Impact of Strict Photo Voter Identification Laws

Phoebe Henninger
University of Michigan
phenn@umich.edu

Marc Meredith
University of Pennsylvania
marcmere@sas.upenn.edu

Michael Morse
Harvard University &
Yale Law School
michael.morse@yale.edu

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- Academic and, even more so, legal literature interested in the disenfranchising effects of strict photo identification (ID) laws
- General belief that some people who wish to vote also lack access to photo identification on Election Day
 - Thought to be concentrated in certain subgroups (e.g., minorities, elderly)
- But wildly different estimates of the magnitudes
 - From practically none (Hood and Buchanan's forthcoming study of South Carolina) to hundreds of thousands (Clinton's discussion of a memo generated by Priorities USA on Wisconsin)

- Our innovation in this paper is to show how administrative data produced in a non-strict photo ID state can inform us about the potential marginal impact of moving from a non-strict to strict photo ID law
 - Our focus is on Michigan
 - Non-strict voter ID law in place since 2007
 - See also Fraga and Miller's working paper on Texas
- People disenfranchised by a switch from a non-strict to strict voter ID law must
 - 1) Vote when the non-strict law is in place
 - 2) Not have access to photo identification if a non-strict photo ID law is in place
 - 3) Not have access to photo identification if a strict photo ID law is in place
- As 3) is a subset of 2), the number of people who fall under 1) and 2) provides an upper bound on the number who fall under 1), 2) and 3)

Figure: Application to Vote

(a) Front

FORM NO. 007-000-0001
REVISED 03/04

Application to Vote – Poll List

Picture identification requirement:
All Michigan voters must show a Michigan driver's license, a Michigan personal identification card or some other acceptable form of picture identification before voting. A voter who is unable to show picture identification can vote after signing an affidavit attesting that he/she is not in possession of picture identification.

Signature of voter:

ELECTION INSPECTOR COMPLETES
 Is in possession of regular voter list

Ballot Style _____
Ballot No. _____
Date of Election _____
Ward _____ Precinct _____

Signature of Inspector _____
Signature of Voter _____

I certify that I am a United States citizen and a registered and qualified voter in this precinct, and hereby make application to vote at this election.

DATE RECEIVED
 SIGNATURE OF VOTER

(b) Back

AFFIDAVIT OF VOTER NOT IN POSSESSION OF PICTURE IDENTIFICATION

I, _____ (Print Name) _____ hereby affirm that I am not in possession of a driver's license, a state-issued personal identification card or any other acceptable form of picture identification as defined in law.

By signing this affidavit, I swear to affirm and understand these facts and true.

SIGNATURE OF VOTER: _____

Penalty: Making a false statement in this affidavit is perjury, punishable by a fine up to \$1,000.00 or imprisonment longer than 90 days, or both.

To be completed by Election Inspector

Inspector is directed to place me this _____ day of _____, 20____.

I certify that the voter filled above has completed the above affidavit in my presence.

Signature of Election Inspector

- We attempted to collect affidavits from a random sample of 20% of the precincts in Michigan, plus a non-random sample of additional precincts
 - Some precincts were consolidated prior to drawing this sample
 - Out of the 863 precincts in the random sample, there are 24 precincts from 9 municipalities that did not provide any information on their affidavits
- Using the Shiny App that I'll show you on the next slide, we coded
 - The voter registration record of the person who filled out the Application to Vote associated with an affidavit
 - Whether the election inspector signed the affidavit
- Use Imai and Khanna's racial imputation package to compute a pdf over the registrant's race

Figure: How We Code (Double) Coded the Applications

Choose a dataset:

Wayne County, Detroit City NS 1

Identify the page of the Application:

1

Did the election inspector sign the Affidavit?

Yes No No Affidavit Attention Check

Match Clear Row Selection

This page has no Applications to Vote.

[Click here to view your past responses](#)
[Having trouble finding a match?](#)

ELECTION INSPECTOR COMPLETES	PRINT NAME: FAY WALLER
<input type="checkbox"/> AFFIDAVIT ON REVERSE COMPLETED	DATE OF BIRTH: [REDACTED] 1942
ELEC. INSP. INITIAL: JR	RESIDENT ADDRESS: 2247 BELVIDERE
BALLOT NO. 00257	I certify that I am a United States citizen and a registered and qualified elector in this precinct, and hereby make application to vote at this election.
VOTER NO. 254	SIGN HERE → X <i>Fay Waller</i> SIGNATURE OF VOTER

Application to Vote – Poll List

Picture identification requirement: All Michigan voters must show a Michigan driver's license, a Michigan personal identification card or some other acceptable form of picture identification before voting. A voter who is unable to show picture identification can vote after signing an affidavit attesting that he/she is not in possession of

Show 10 entries

Search:

id	first_name	middle_name	last_name	year	month	day	address	county	jurisdiction	juris_row
All	All	All	Waller	All	All	All	All	All	All	All
805877	Debora	Hannah	Waller	1957	5	11	4102 Courville St	Wayne	Detroit City NS 1	859
805878	Willie	Douglas	Waller	1957	8	1	4102 Courville St	Wayne	Detroit City NS 1	860
1134697	Fay	Dorris	Waller	1942	11	1	2247 Belvidere St	Wayne	Detroit City NS 1	2772

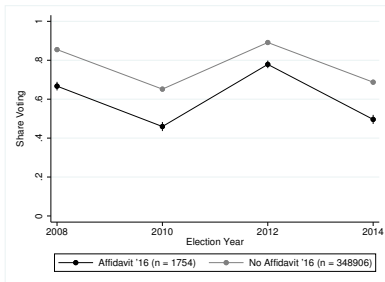
Table: Matching Affidavits to Voter File

Which Affidavits # of Affidavits	All Collected 8880	From Sampled Precinct 4147
Affidavit Matched To:		
Single Registrant	0.990	0.990
Multiple Registrants	0.004	0.003
No Registrant	0.006	0.007
Election Inspector:		
Signed Affidavit	0.505	0.431
Didn't Sign Affidavit	0.435	0.530
Signature Unobservable	0.060	0.039
Race Imputation Uses:		
Geocoded Census Block	0.956	0.950
Modal Census Tract in Precinct	0.044	0.050

Table: Comparing Affidavit Filers to the Population of Polling Place Voters

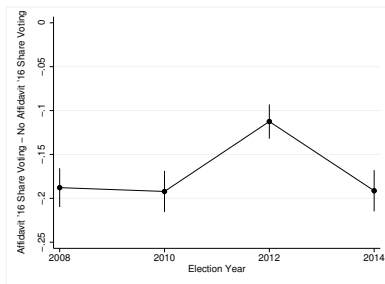
Which Precincts	All Precincts in 20% Sample			Only Precincts in 20% Sample With Inspector Signature Field		
	Only Matched Affidavits	All Polling Place Voters	Difference	Only Signed, Matched Affidavits	All Polling Place Voters	Difference
# of Registrants	4116	686493		1773	665095	
Previously Voted	0.730	0.856	-0.127	0.742	0.856	-0.115
Female	0.568	0.531	0.037	0.562	0.531	0.031
Imputed Race Probability:						
White	0.498	0.778	-0.280	0.638	0.778	-0.140
Black	0.414	0.129	0.285	0.261	0.129	0.133
Hispanic	0.045	0.043	0.001	0.053	0.044	0.009
Asian	0.018	0.026	-0.008	0.018	0.026	-0.008
Other	0.026	0.024	0.002	0.030	0.024	0.006

Figure: Levels of Past Turnout Among 2016 Polling Place Voters Who Did and Didn't File an Affidavit



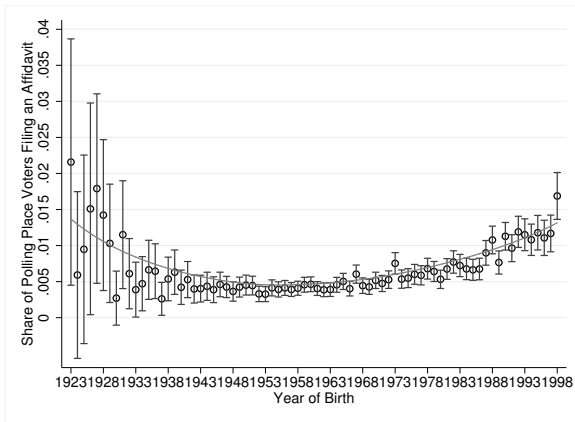
Note: Bars represent the 95% confidence intervals. Sample restricted to 2016 polling place voters who were registered to vote on or before September 30, 2008.

Figure: Difference in Past Turnout of 2016 Polling Place Voters Who Did and Didn't File an Affidavit



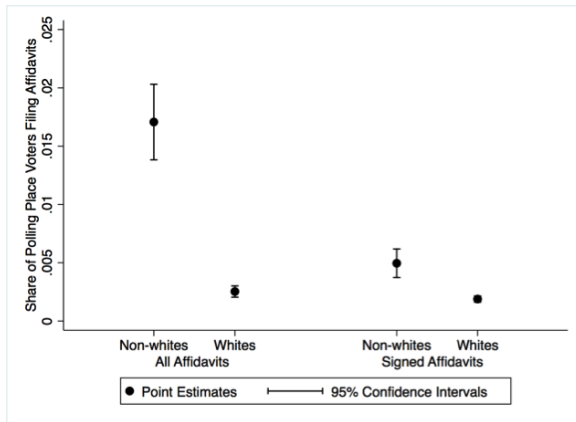
Note: Bars represent the 95% confidence intervals. Sample restricted to 2016 polling place voters who were registered to vote on or before September 30, 2008.

Figure: Share of Polling Place Voters Filing Affidavits by Year of Birth



Note: Bars represent the 95% confidence intervals.

Figure: Share of Polling Place Voters Filing Affidavits by Race



Note: Bars represent the 95% confidence intervals.

Additional things that we do in the paper:

- 1 Use a multivariate regression to consider how all of these variables (and some contextual variables) simultaneously relate to affidavit use
- 2 Apply these regression models to predict the probability that each absentee voter would have filed an affidavit if doing so would have been necessary in order to vote
- 3 Come up with an estimate of the total number of Michigan voters that wished to vote, but lacked photo ID
- 4 Look at which party's ballot voters who filed an affidavit requested in the 2016 presidential primary
- 5 Consider the possibility that some voters without photo ID may be disenfranchised by a non-strict law

Table: What People Believe about their State's Voter ID Law

ID Requirement	Strict Photo	Not Strict Photo	Strict Non-Photo	Not Strict Non-Photo	None None	All
Which ID?						
# of Respondents	616	999	280	761	1,768	4,424
# of States	7	10	3	14	17	51
Yes, you can vote	0.077	0.153	0.115	0.185	0.383	0.241
Yes, but only after filling out additional paperwork or showing other forms of ID	0.171	0.214	0.226	0.204	0.162	0.186
Yes, but photo ID must be provided to election officials within a few days of the election	0.061	0.056	0.059	0.052	0.043	0.051
No, you cannot vote	0.665	0.556	0.552	0.520	0.378	0.491
No answer	0.025	0.021	0.047	0.038	0.034	0.031

Cells show the share of respondents reporting each row's answer by state voter ID law in their state of residence. State ID laws as reported by the National Conference of State Legislators in February 2018.

Conclusions:

- Moving from a non-strict to a strict photo voter law (at least in Michigan) would disenfranchise, at most, 1 in every 200 voters (and likely substantially fewer)
 - Suggest the narrow focus on this margin may be unwarranted
- Potential disparate racial impact when moving from a non-strict to strict photo voter ID law, is large in percent, but not percentage point, terms
- Administrative data from states without a strict photo ID law may be more useful than administrative data from states with a strict photo ID law for learning about their impact
- Separating the affidavit from the Application to Vote in Michigan may produce more reliable measures of who lacked photo ID when voting