



Legislation Affecting Voting Rights and Access in 2023.

Debates around voting rights have always been central to American political discourse. The 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries saw the expansion of the right to vote to religious minorities, people of color and women. However, the statutory right to vote was never the end goal for voting rights advocates. The civil rights movement, particularly the Voting Rights Act of 1965, drove our nation nearer to fair and equal democratic participation.

Policy impacting voting rights is a priority issue for state legislators, intensified by contentious national elections and imperfect systems.

The 2024 elections are quickly approaching. As of July 2023, state

legislators have introduced 1,188 bills impacting voting rights. Eighty bills have made it through the legislative process to become law. Understanding this activity, including how and where it is playing out, is key to understanding democracy. We leveraged Plural's data analyze legislation affecting voting rights and access so far in 2023.

In our analysis, we focused on legislation that expanded or limited access to vote. For example, legislation increasing early vote time is categorized as expanding, while legislation restricting mail-in voting is categorized as restricting. While important to monitor, legislation unrelated to the ability to vote, like bills that regulate ballot-counting devices, were not considered.

LEGISLATION LIMITING VOTING RIGHTS & ACCESS

So far in 2023, 370 bills limiting voting access have been introduced in 45 states, along with both chambers of the

U.S. Congress. Fifteen states have passed 27 of these bills in the first six months of 2023. View these bills [here](#).

Legislators in Texas, Arizona, and Virginia have introduced the majority of these bills. Arkansas and Oklahoma have passed the most into law.

Most Active in Introducing and Passing Bills Limiting Voting Rights & Access in 2023			
Introduced		Passed	
Texas	43	Arkansas	10
Arizona	30	Oklahoma	10
Virginia	23	Texas	8
Minnesota	22	Idaho, Mississippi, South Dakota, & Wyoming	5
Illinois	19		

STATES THAT PASSED LEGISLATION LIMITING VOTING RIGHTS AND ACCESS

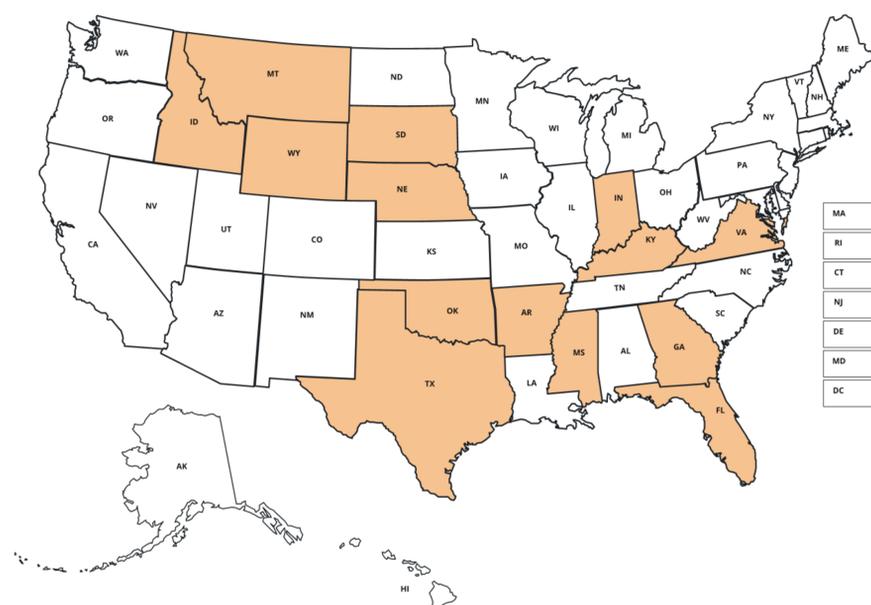
Voting rights debates and legislation have centered around absentee and early voting. This is, in part, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nine states have passed laws restricting access to early or absentee voting. Kansas and Arkansas both passed laws to this end. [Kansas SB 106](#) and [Arkansas HB 1411](#) limit election officials' ability to mail absentee ballots, unless they are requested by registered voters.

[Texas SB 1750](#) has become the center of great division, and now a lawsuit. This bill is not directly related to the right to vote, and therefore was not included in our analysis. Passed in June, SB 1750



eliminates the local elections administrator position in counties with a population exceeding 3,500,000. The law will take effect on September 1, 2023.

However, just one county in Texas meets this criteria – Harris County. Democrats have criticized the new law as a targeted attempt to disrupt elections in the state's most diverse county. [Harris County officials](#) filed a lawsuit in early July, challenging the constitutionality of the law ahead of Houston's mayoral elections in November 2023.



States that passed legislation limiting voting rights and access are shaded in orange.

LEGISLATION EXPANDING VOTING RIGHTS & ACCESS

So far in 2023, legislators in 48 states (all but North Dakota and Ohio) introduced 817 bills that would expand voting access. Fifty-four of these measures, in 24 states, have already become law. View each of these bills [here](#).

Legislators in New York, Texas and Mississippi introduced the most bills expanding voting rights. Legislators in Rhode Island, Texas and Arkansas passed the most bills expanding voting rights.

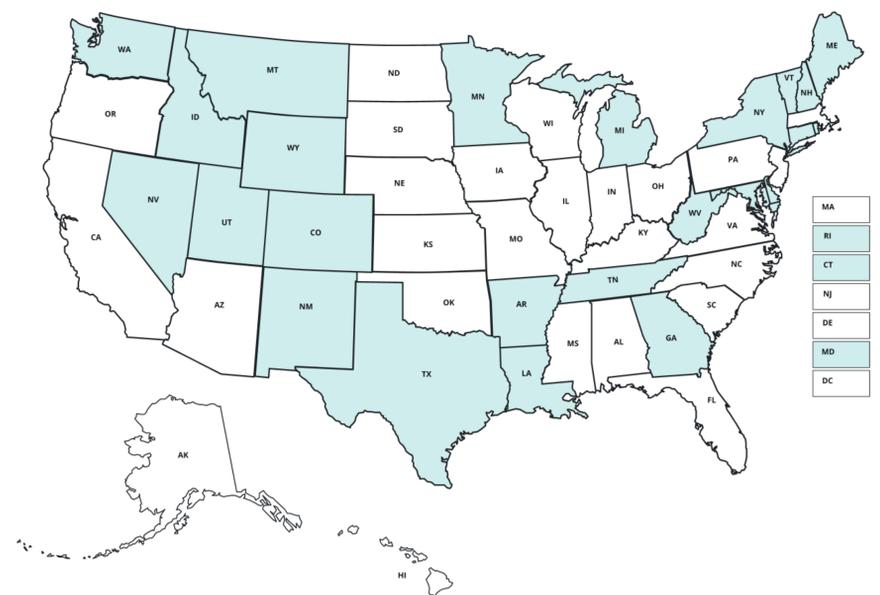
Most Active in Introducing and Passing Bills Expanding Voting Rights & Access in 2023			
Introduced		Passed	
New York	154	Rhode Island	6
Texas	94	Texas	6
Mississippi	61	Arkansas	5
Minnesota	42	Maine	4
Missouri	32	Nevada	4

STATES THAT PASSED LEGISLATION EXPANDING VOTING RIGHTS AND ACCESS

Introduced bills aiming to expand access to voting greatly outnumbered those with the opposite intent. Democratic minorities in Republican-controlled state legislatures made protecting voting rights a priority.

As those following policy know, an introduction is no sure sign of broad support. Legislators in Missouri and Mississippi introduced more than 90 bills aiming to expand voting access. However, they failed to win enough support to pass any into law.

Maine, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico and Washington each passed measures implementing or expanding automatic voter registration. Maine [LD 1344](#) allows the transfer of voter registration applications between any existing automatic voter registration entity and the Secretary of State up to seven days before an election. The previous law stopped that transfer 21 days before an election.



States that passed legislation limiting voting rights and access are shaded in blue.

Five states have passed measures that expand voting access to incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals who were previously stripped of that right.



After similar efforts failed in prior sessions, advocates celebrated the passage of Minnesota's HF 28 in March. It drew the most national attention of these bills. HF 28 will restore the right to vote to over 50,000 Minnesotans convicted of a felony but no longer incarcerated.

CONCLUSION

Following the 2020 elections, voting rights became a central issue in 2022 campaigns as well as the 2023 legislative sessions. As we approach another contentious national election in 2024, attention on voting policy will continue to grow. Plural is committed to analyzing the trends in this space to help the public understand our democratic processes.



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