

Convenient Election Day voting centers can improve voter turnout: study

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The convenience of Election Day voting centers can increase voter turnout, according to a new paper by political scientists Robert Stein of Rice University and Greg Vonnahme of the University of Alabama.

"Voting at Non-Precinct Polling Places: A Review and Research Agenda" appears in the latest issue of the *Election Law Journal*. The paper is an analysis of existing research on voter identification and nonprecinct voting, two subjects that have generated considerable debate in the media and between [political parties](#).

While suggestions of widespread voter fraud and the impact of various voting laws and reforms may be overstated, the positive impact of voting centers is not, said Stein, the Lena Gohlman Fox Professor of [Political Science](#) at Rice. Of all the election laws, reforms and voting methods, Election Day voting centers are the only system that has had an appreciable effect on [voter turnout](#).

"Over the last 3-5 years, research has revealed that implementation of voting centers has led to up to a 10 percent increase in not only voter turnout, but turnout of people who wouldn't normally vote," Stein said.

Stein compared voting to shopping, saying that most store owners try to make the [shopping experience](#) easy for customers. Thanks to their size and accessibility, voting centers have the same positive impact on voting, he said.

"In dozens of states, we've found that if voters have an opportunity to vote at a location that's more central to where they conduct their daily business, they're more likely to vote," Stein said. "Voting is not unlike any other type of retail sale. Customers don't want to spend a lot of extra time looking for a place to shop, a parking space or a manager. The same is true for voters, particularly those who are as undecided about who to vote for as they are to vote."

According to Stein, voting centers work best in low-density [urban areas](#), rather than cities with large walking populations, and are most appealing to voters who are less likely to vote due to hectic schedules.

"It may sound demeaning or undemocratic, but the simple fact of the matter is that for most Americans, voting is not a high-priority activity," he said. "When we have elections, people require convenience."

Stein hopes that the paper will encourage more awareness and research of nonprecinct voting in an effort to help citizens and their representatives make informed and intelligent choices about the mode of election administration they want to adopt.

More information: Voting at Non-Precinct Polling Places: A Review and Research Agenda: [bakerinstitute.org/publication ... LJPolling-100311.pdf](https://bakerinstitute.org/publication...LJPolling-100311.pdf)

Provided by Rice University

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