

# Study finds Texas voter photo ID requirement discourages turnout

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This week marks the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act. This week also marks a watershed ruling by a federal appeals court striking down the controversial Texas voter ID law as violating that landmark civil rights act.

A new study conducted by the University of Houston Hobby Center for Public Policy and Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy examines the impact of the contested Texas law in U.S. Congressional District 23 (CD-23).

The study suggests that the most significant impact of the Texas voter photo ID law on voter participation in one particular district was to discourage turnout among registered voters who mistakenly believed they did not possess the correct photo identification.

"One of the most striking findings of this study is that potential voters who did not vote actually did possess one of the valid forms of photo ID," said Jim Granato, professor and director of the Hobby Center for Public Policy. "An important issue to be explored is not just the voter photo ID law itself, but the actual education and outreach efforts to ensure all eligible voters understand what form of photo ID may be used to vote."

Spanning a large geographic area in west and south Texas, CD-23 is a Latino majority district with Hispanics accounting for 65.8 percent of the district's voting-age population and 58.5 percent of its registered

voters. It is also widely considered to be the only one of the state's 36 U.S. House districts that is competitive for both Democratic and Republican Party candidates. A telephone survey of 400 registered voters who did not vote in CD-23's November 2014 election was conducted in English and Spanish by the Hobby Center for Public Policy's Survey Research Institute.

The 5.8 percent of the CD-23 non-voters stated the principle reason they did not vote was because they did not possess any of the seven forms of photo identification required by the state. More than twice that many (12.8 percent) agreed their lack of any one of the seven photo IDs was a reason they did not vote. However, when further queried about the different forms of photo identification in their possession, the survey revealed that a much lower proportion (2.7 percent), in fact, lacked one of the seven needed to vote in person.

The study also found Latino non-voters were significantly more likely than Anglo non-voters to strongly agree or agree that a lack of photo ID was a reason they did not cast a ballot in the Nov. 4 contest.

The findings suggest that the presence of the law and its potential impact on the outcome of that election kept far more supporters of Pete Gallego, D-Alpine, the then-freshman incumbent representative, away from the polls than those who supported the district's ultimate winner of the election, Will Hurd, R-San Antonio.

"Our expectation is to build on this initial case study by analyzing additional Texas congressional districts and investigating other states' voter ID laws," Granato said. "Broadening the study to examine the extent to which voter fraud exists is another interesting avenue to explore."

**More information:** The study, titled "The Texas Voter Photo ID Law

and the 2014 Election: A Study of Texas' Congressional District 23" can be found at [www.uh.edu/class/hcpp/docs/voteridcd23.pdf](http://www.uh.edu/class/hcpp/docs/voteridcd23.pdf)

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