

# Post-2008 Voting Bills and their Partisan Origins

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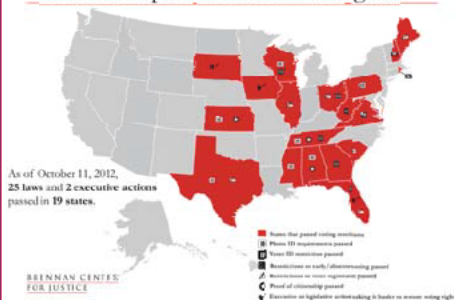
Political Science Honors in the Major Thesis  
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## What produced the post-2008 change in state laws limiting access to the vote?

### Introduction

- Beginning after the 2008 election, many state legislatures across the country proposed and enacted legislation on voting, including bills that:
  - require one to present an identification at the polls in order to vote
  - Restrict on voter registration
  - Restrict time that one can vote
- Although the bill sponsors claim that these new laws protect against voter fraud, many scholars and activists claim that these bills are simply a strategy to help prevent specific demographic groups from voting.
- According to the *Brennan Center for Justice*, 10 percent of all eligible voters and 25 percent of eligible African American voters do not have government issues ID's.
- Recent research finds that the new laws could make it harder for more than 5 million voters to cast ballots by reducing times for early voting or by requiring government issues ID's.
- My research seeks to find whether these laws are the result of:
  - Concerns about voter fraud;
  - Republican efforts to win elections,
  - Interest in preventing minority groups from voting in general

### States that passed restrictive voting laws



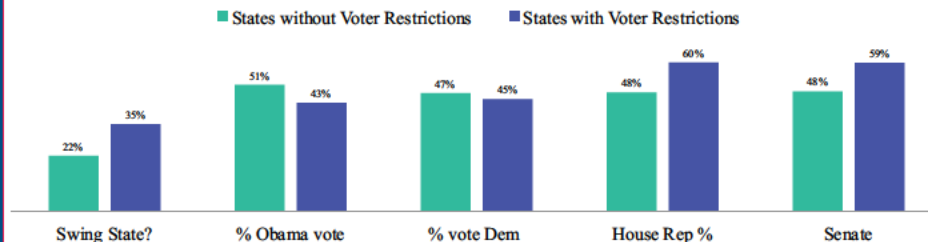
### Hypothesis/Method

**"Voter ID, which is going to allow Governor Mitt Romney to win the state of Pennsylvania, done."**-Pennsylvania House Majority Leader Mike Turzai

I hypothesize that the various state legislatures had partisan motives when passing the voting restriction bills after 2008.

I gathered data and answered specific questions for all 50 states, including:  
 Did the state pass a voting bill after 2008?  
 What was the specific Partisan composition of each legislature?  
 Is a state considered a "Swing State"?  
 Which Party controls the legislature?

### Political Variables



What are the demographics for each state? (Including % of African Americans, Hispanics, Seniors of 65 and up, and Youth between age 20 and 29).

### Demographic Variables



I did case studies on Florida, Wisconsin, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Mexico, and Maryland in order to compare and contrast specific states that had passed or not passed bills in order to determine what main variable impacted the passage, or lack thereof, of a bill. The one difference that stood out the most was that Of the 4 cases where voting bills were passed, 3 out of 4 states had Republican Controlled Legislatures, whereas the 3 states where voting bills were not passed had Democratically Controlled Legislatures.

### Results/Discussion

- I find no significant difference in the African American and Hispanic population proportions in states that passed voting laws and states that did not.
- However, there was a statistically significant difference in the partisan composition of the state legislatures that passed post 2008 voting laws and those that did not pass voting laws.
- The states that passed voting laws had, on the average, over 10% more Republicans in their legislative bodies than the states that did not pass voting laws.
- Further, there is a statistically significant difference between the percentage of Obama voters in states that passed voting bills as opposed to those that did not.

Of all the states with **REPUBLICAN** controlled legislatures, 71% have passed restrictive voting bills after 2008.

Of all the states with **DEMOCRATICALLY** controlled legislatures, only 14% of them have passed restrictive voting bills after 2008.

### State Legislatures that Passed Restrictive Voting Bills

