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APM Research Lab and McCourtney Institute for Democracy Present Survey Findings About Voting Rights

New analysis reveals insights about how Americans really feel about voter requirements

ST. PAUL, Minn., June 15, 2021— The [APM Research Lab](#) from American Public Media (APM) and the [McCourtney Institute for Democracy](#) from Penn State have released new analysis from the April 2021 Mood of the Nation Poll revealing insights about how Americans feel about voting rights. **THIS INFORMATION IS EMBARGOED FROM PUBLICATION UNTIL IT IS RELEASED PUBLICLY AT 5:00 A.M. EDT ON 6/16/21.**

Recent state election laws, such as Georgia’s Election Integrity Act of 2021, have dominated media headlines and polarized political parties. Provisions within these laws have been decried as a blatant voter suppression tactics while others have raised concerns of outside influence swaying votes. These are the narratives that have unfolded in the media, but what do Americans really think?

“The poll shows Republicans are hyper-vigilant against potential fraud while Democrats are worried that voter ID and purging of voter rolls will ensnare eligible voters and deny them the right to vote,” says Eric Plutzer, PhD, Director of Polling, McCourtney Institute for Democracy.

The McCourtney Institute for Democracy regularly conducts the nationally representative Mood of the Nation Poll to gauge how Americans are feeling about various aspects of American politics and society. The April 2021 poll included questions about election policy and voter requirements. The APM Research Lab has taken a detailed look at these questions to provide further insight on how American’s view voting rights – beyond the headlines.

The analysis is presented in two parts, views on election policies and waiting in line to vote, and the APM Research Lab focused on several key questions in the Mood of the Nation Poll related to everything from voting rights for people convicted of felonies the government’s responsibility in the election process.

Major takeaways:

Views on Election Policies

- Nearly three-quarters of Americans favor allowing people convicted of felonies to vote after serving their sentences; support is particularly strong among Black Americans and Democrats.
- There is a partisan split on whether people should be removed from registration lists if they have not recently voted or confirmed their registration.
- 83% of American adults favor ensuring the eligibility of those listed on voter rolls by allowing states to cooperate on a national database that checks whether potential voters have moved or have duplicate registrations.

- 90% of American adults favor using information from the Social Security Administration and death certificates to remove those who are no longer living from registered voter lists.
- Two-thirds of Americans support requiring all voters to show government-issued identification to vote.
- A slight majority prioritizes the government’s role in making it as easy as possible for citizens to register to vote over ensuring voter eligibility.
- When asked to explain why they prioritized either ease of voting or ensuring voter eligibility, respondents’ verbatim comments included:
 - “Voting is the foundation of our country. Anything less risks privilege and bigotry” – 61-year-old male Democrat from Connecticut who prioritizes ease of voting.
 - “There is a lot of corruption. If I’m going to go out and vote I want my vote to count and not be cancelled out by someone who is using a dead person’s ballot.” – 24-year-old male Republican from Pennsylvania who prioritizes ensuring voter eligibility.

Waiting In Line to Vote

- Nearly half of Americans say that waiting to vote more than 30 minutes is unacceptable.
- When asked if they personally would still vote in the 2022 midterm election if it involved wait times of 90 minutes or more, half of American adults say they definitely would still vote.
- Strong majorities of Americans support allowing community groups to provide assistance to those waiting over an hour to vote, including:
 - Holding a place in line for elderly and disabled citizens until they reach the polling place (86%),
 - Providing bottled water to citizens waiting to vote (84%),
 - Providing food to citizens waiting to vote (71%), and
 - Distributing non-partisan voter guides (62%).
- A strong majority of Americans thinks the distribution of campaign literature to those waiting to vote should be prohibited (68%).
- When asked to explain their support for- or opposition to- allowing the distribution of food and water to people waiting in line to vote, respondents’ verbatim comments included:
 - “Hunger and thirst is a barrier to voting. Voting must be easy and accessible. Long wait times are inexcusable, and if they occur, food and water should be provided.” – 33-year-old female Democrat from Idaho who favors allowing distribution of food and water to those waiting in line to vote.
 - “It could be more work for the workers if people make a mess & it might encourage people that aren’t going to vote come there just for the food.” – 30-year-old male Democrat from Rhode Island who opposes allowing the distribution of food and water to those waiting in line to vote.

“With many states considering changes impacting who would vote it is important to hear directly from the American public,” says APM Research Lab Managing Partner Craig Helmstetter. “Many measures are bipartisan—including providing water for those waiting and restoring the vote to former felons—some are less so, including purging non-voters from registration lists and requiring IDs.”

For complete survey findings and methods, including transparency disclosures required by the American Association for Public Opinion Research, CNN, and the Roper Center, [click here for election policies](#) and [here for voter wait times](#).

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Source: Data are copyright Nielsen Audio, Nationwide DMA data, Persons 12+, Fall '20.

About the APM Research Lab

The APM Research Lab is a division of American Public Media aimed at informing the public by producing credible research- and analysis-based content. The Research Lab conducts research projects of all types — surveys, demographic analyses, literature reviews, and more — and informs the work of partner organizations and the broader public through traditional reports, as well as infographics, blog posts, interactives, presentations and other platforms. For more information, visit apmresearchlab.org.

About the McCourtney Institute for Democracy

The McCourtney Institute for Democracy at Penn State promotes scholarship and practical innovations that defend and advance democracy in the United States and abroad. Through teaching, research, and public outreach, the Institute leverages the resources of Penn State and partners around the world to foster a model of deliberation, policymaking, and responsiveness that is passionate, informed, and civil. For more information, visit democracy.psu.edu.

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