

Democracy is the right to vote. Socialism is the intent behind it.

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I voted in the 2020 Presidential Election. The entire process took me around fifteen minutes since my local precinct didn't have a long line and, as a college student, I had ample time and resources to vote at my leisure. I even had the luxury of voting early if I chose. I also had had the luxury of spending two hours at my DMV a few weeks earlier to receive my state ID. I had the luxury of knowing that the entire time I would spend voting would not result in an opportunity cost that would make my life difficult. In short, I had luxuries that are currently enjoyed by a portion of the voting public, a portion that is likely to be reduced by new laws passed or proposed in Republican-controlled states. This is worrisome indeed.

There are millions of working-class Americans that do not have the same luxury I do. For starters, the staff that work at my own university have to take time off work, un-paid, to vote. This is impossible for many of them, who live from paycheck to paycheck. Otherwise, they would have to use their 30-minute lunch breaks, and thereby miss a meal. Now expand this one example to the millions of Americans across the country who are in similar situations, and it becomes clear why the issue of expanding access to voting is so important.

In most democracies, voting laws are consistent across states, provinces, and prefectures with one unified voting structure in place to handle local and federal elections. Such as India, where all states require [voting I.D.](#) and only specific groups of people are allowed absentee ballots rather than each state having their own law on the [issue](#). Why then, does the U.S. stand alone in its fractured nature? States in the U.S. have varying laws, with some states allowing Absentee voting with no excuse, and some states requiring an excuse to vote [absentee](#). Additionally, some states require a form of voter I.D. to cast a ballot, but some do not. Conventional arguments center around states' rights and the autonomy of states in their decision making, however, it is possible to retain autonomy while having uniformity amongst the states. This is clear in the administration of other democratic countries like India, Japan, and the U.K., where local bodies have autonomy in decision making but still have uniformity on a federal level in terms of voting.

The answer to this peculiarity lies in the U.S. constitution, where [states are awarded](#) the self-determination for “making decisions about the rules of elections” but “any laws Congress may pass regulating congressional elections would preempt state law.” This self-determination ensures that any attempt at a federal level to reform elections is met by broad resistance, as states attempt to preserve the structures they have already set in place. This fight played out during the 1950's and 60's when Southern U.S. states fought to protect discriminatory voting practices, they had implemented following the civil war to restrict voting among the lower classes and, moreover, people of color. However, with the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, the government established regulations that would ensure federal approval of new election measures and largely did away with the discriminatory practices. Unfortunately, this key provision of federal oversight was struck down by the Supreme Court of the U.S. in 2013, with Chief Justice Roberts [stating](#), “Congress must ensure that the legislation it passes to remedy that problem speaks to current conditions”. This dismissive view of reality was quickly proven incorrect as Texas immediately moved forward to enact stricter voter ID laws and changing redistricting maps. In the following years states have continued to impose more [draconian measures](#), with laws in Georgia and Florida, “[people] can now be charged with a crime for handing out water or snacks to voters waiting in line at the polls.”

None of the recent bills have been ruled to be outwardly discriminatory, presumably since they don't target a particular race or class. Their existence is based on lies and false platitudes of

“election interference” that has been repeatedly debunked by several of the country’s highest courts and agencies. Even the Governor of Texas has admitted that there was no election fraud in the (contested) [election of 2020](#). Between the conflicting evidence present regarding the nature of voter fraud, it would then be difficult for an average citizen to understand the emergence of voting reform implemented by several states. The central issue revolves around the new obstacles to voting that these bills would introduce. For instance, S.B. 90 in Florida, S.B. 202 in Georgia, S.F. 413 in Iowa would force working class voters in particular to make difficult choices between voting and working as it “limit(s) the number, location, or availability of mail ballot drop boxes” thereby reducing the opportunities a voter has to cast their ballot. Similarly, H.B. 1112 and H.B. 1244 in Arizona, and S.B. 169 in Montana would “impose harsher voter ID requirements for in-person voting” which could further disenfranchise lower-income workers that have to make tradeoffs between taking time to meet these restrictions at the expense of their regular working hours.

To establish the right to vote is simple, to enforce the right is difficult. Even in a country where democracy is synonymous with the national identity, where centuries of social strife has not changed the inalienable desire to stay a democracy, and where these ideals are so deeply ingrained in its citizens that any alternative is unimaginable, enforcing the tenets of democracy are challenging. It not only requires the individual to see themselves in others around them, but to appreciate that their story is unique. Enforcing democracy requires that every American combat a longstanding [tendency](#) to see the country as a collection of individuals, rather than a collective with shared interests and concerns.

This tendency reveals the elephant in the room in regard to American socialism, which is the challenge of convincing Americans that they are more than the sum of their individual parts, that individuals represent just one unique cog in a broader system. If individuals are but parts of the whole, then their success comes from the success of the whole. The difference is subtle, but it is key, it is the understanding that you are important but so is everyone else. It isn’t that radical of a concept, we are all part of the Machine of America, unique individuals within it. We just need to take a step further and instill a desire to vote and live our lives in solidarity with those that have less than us so they can live better lives and by extension, we would, a kind of “bottom-up” existence that can contribute to a more perfect union.