

## New Report Released by National Commission on Voting Rights: More Work Needed to Improve Registration and Voting in the U.S.

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*Minority and Low-Income Communities, Voters with Disabilities, Young Voters and People with Felony Convictions Continue to Face Obstacles to Voting*

**Washington, D.C.** – The National Commission on the Voting Rights (NCVR) released a [national report](#), *Improving Elections in the United States: Voices from the Field*, highlighting the need for state and local election administrators to increase efforts to improve voter experience by removing obstacles to both registering and casting a ballot. The report, focuses primarily on the voices of the people impacted by how elections are run in their communities—the successes as well as the challenges—through the compelling testimony provided by hundreds of witnesses at 25 state and regional NCVR hearings convened in 2013 and 2014.

The report illustrates the continuing tension that exists in our nation’s election system between access and barriers. The recent passage of state laws and initiatives to modernize elections make voting more accessible for many voters. However, as the NCVR heard, many states continue to fall short, either by moving too slowly away from outmoded systems and practices, failing to adequately enforce existing legislative requirements or, worse, proactively rolling back voters’ basic rights through restrictive legislation.

“While we are encouraged by the proactive measures many election administrators have taken to make voting more accessible, many voters across the country- including voters with disabilities, students and people with felony convictions- still face unreasonable barriers to the polls,” said Marcia Johnson Blanco, co-director of the Voting Rights Project at the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law . “As we look to 2016, we encourage election officials in states and localities to do all they can to pass laws and develop procedures that expand access and encourage voter participation.”

### **Some key findings of the report include:**

- **Voter Registration Needs to Be Easier** : Expansive registration programs, such as online and same day voter registration, encourage participation in the electoral process while non-compliance with federal voter registration laws and rollbacks of state laws hurts voters.
- **Long Lines at the Polls Still a Possibility in 2016:** Elections improve when election administrators plan early, develop creative strategies and use technology wisely to streamline the voting process for voters. Yet, many voters still face challenges on Election Day due to a variety of factors, including insufficient poll worker training or understaffing at polling locations; excessively restrictive voter ID laws and/or cuts to laws that encourage participation; and shrinking budgets that restrict counties from upgrading old and malfunctioning voting equipment.

- **Voters with Disabilities, Students and People with Felony Convictions:** Voters with disabilities often arrive at polling locations to find that accessible voting equipment is not functioning properly or that poll workers do not know how to operate the machines. Out-of-state college students have been denied regular ballots because their college addresses do not match their driver's licenses. Individuals convicted of a felony continue to face a maze of confusing rules and regulations to restore of their voting rights.  
The report, is a follow-up to the NCVR's first report, [\*Protecting Minority Voters: Our Work is Not Done\*](#) which concluded that voting discrimination is still a prevalent and ongoing problem in the United States and that the states and localities previously covered by Sections 4 of the Voting Rights Act continue to implement voting laws and procedures that disproportionately affect African American, Latino, Asian American and Native American voters.  
The NCVR is led by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and the following national commissioners: Civil rights leader, Dolores Huerta; NAACP Vice Chair Leon Russell; former Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights John Dunne; Arizona State College Professor and Indian Law Clinic Director Patty Ferguson-Bohnee; and former Executive Director of the League of Young Voters Biko Baker.