

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

February 24, 2026

Floor Speech on Voting Access

[\[VIDEO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: Mr. President, I rise today because I think the President tonight is going to continue to talk about his radical changes to our electoral system. He has tried by executive order, just as he tried to impose tariffs by executive order, and he found out that he didn't have that authority, according to the Supreme Court. We know now that Article One, Section Four of the Constitution says that the states administer elections. That Congress can regulate, but there is no role for the President. I say this because I'm very concerned about the President's proposal and I'm very concerned about the SAVE Act.

Greg Kimsey, who is the Clark County Auditor of a part of Washington where I guarantee you, we have real election issues. Basically, the other day, in trying to fight against the SAVE [America] Act said this: "Voting is a constitutional right, a barrier to the exercise of constitutional right should only be enacted if the government's compelling interest is greater than the citizen's individual constitutional right, the government's interest in ensuring that only U.S. citizens vote would not be significantly enhanced by the SAVE [America] Act."

So here is a Republican auditor who is basically saying in my state that this is a constitutional right by the citizenry of our state, and that the SAVE [America] Act is basically putting too much of a burden on it.

Have states been failing in election administration? Is there a public outcry from Republicans or Democrats who observe the elections every year, or the League of Women Voters that the federal government should overturn our Constitution and give this power to the President?

State systems right now are working, and they are not finding significant voter fraud. States have ways of finding out fraud. That is how the system works, because it is based on your signature and saying who you are.

In King County in my state, the largest county [by] population, only had 12 instances of voter fraud in the 2024 election that were referred to the prosecutor's office for investigation. Now we're talking out of millions of votes. None were related to a non-citizen casting a vote, according to King County Elections Director Julie Wise. Nationally, the conservative Heritage Foundation found 1,620 cases of fraud between 1982 and the year 2025 so that is 1,000 cases of voter fraud, basically over a 40-year period of time. In Texas, they only found 113 cases in those 43 years. And in Georgia, 36 cases.

So again, by comparison, if you're looking at these numbers from a national number, 154 million Americans voted in 2024. The Cato Institute, another conservative group, found similar results in places like Utah, Louisiana, Idaho, Michigan, and Montana. The League of Women Voters is also citing their opposition to the SAVE [America] Act in saying that only one ten-thousandth of 1% is the case of voter fraud.

I wish I had a chart up here is where I could put the zeros -- .0001%. So one ten-thousandth of a percent of voter fraud. That's what we found. But somehow people are saying we should disenfranchise millions of Americans -- some have estimated as high as 9% of the voting public -- to somehow improve that one ten-thousandth of one percent. Somehow, that's what we should do.

The League of Women Voters opposes the SAVE [American] Act because it argues: "By creating a 'show your papers' requirement to not only register but also to cast a ballot, lawmakers seek to suppress millions of eligible Americans from voting."

I also had a letter from the former Republican Secretary of State in my state, Sam Reed, who said: "I oppose the SAVE [America] Act. Neither the President nor Congress should be in the business of micromanaging elections. As a longtime Republican election administration official, I adamantly support our nation's constitutional framers' decision that the election process be decentralized to states."

I issued a snapshot report, Mr. President, last week detailing the impacts of the SAVE [America] Act on the voters, and believe me, it is going to cost them time and money. A replacement for a birth certificate -- because that's what you're going to need to show that you are a US citizen -- costs anywhere from \$23 to \$50. A passport can be as much as \$165.

Twenty-one million Americans don't have these documents readily available. 7% of Texas voters don't. 10% of Georgia voters don't, and you're basically now asking them to go and find them.

And what about the women in our country that maybe have been divorced don't have the same name, they have paperwork that's messed up. How is she going to get the right documentation in the right period of time, since passing the SAVE [America] Act and putting it on the President's desk, means it is implemented immediately for this election.

Election officials are generally open normal working hours, which would mean a voter would have to take time off from work or hire child care just to go down there and [show] these papers.

[T]he SAVE [America] Act puts up barriers and it gives the President the authority to have Homeland Security [reviewing] the voter rolls. That is right. They would take voting rolls and voting information and basically start to [approve] it.

Negligible voter fraud, but yet massive disenfranchisement, that is what would be created.

So Mr. President, I'm very concerned, because our national voting system does depend on you being a US citizen. This is what the ballot actually says. [] Here's one of my old ballots that I took a picture of. It basically says on the outside of your ballot, return as soon as possible by election day. This ballot contains an envelope, and your signature will be compared to your voter registration, and then it asks you to sign.

But since I wanted to make this a little clearer, I put this attestation that is on the top of the ballot that everybody -- so you're directed when you see this ballot, you know that that's what you have to do. You have to sign there. You have to read this attestation: I do solemnly swear and affirm, under the penalty of perjury, that I am a US citizen. And it goes on to say that failure of this is a felony punishable by a maximum imprisonment of five years in jail or a fine of \$10,000 or both. And then you sign your name.

Now the notion that somebody thinks illegal immigrants are running around the United States of America signing ballots saying they're a US citizen, when they can read right here that it says, I do solemnly swear under perjury and these fines that I'm a US citizen, I don't think so. These people aren't even going to the grocery store right now. They're not even going to the doctor's office. They're scared to pick their kids up from school.

And somehow, somebody is perpetrating this notion that they are signing ballots and basically trying to [sway] the election when I just said it's one ten-thousandth of 1% of voter fraud. And the voter fraud that they're catching isn't even non-citizens, it's probably people who actually have [committed] felonies or other types of actions.

Because guess what, when you go to vote and you sign this ballot and you register, which also says you have to be a US citizen, and then you have people at the voting place. Every signature is checked. Every signature is checked. In fact, in our state, the Washington State Patrol basically advises the election officials how to compare the signatures. And while they're comparing the signatures, there's Republicans and Democrats and League of Women Voters and observers in every election official office checking to see that that information is correct.

Now you want to move all of that to the Homeland Security Department and let them be in charge of this, and let them say how many people they think should be thrown off the rolls. I don't. This is a constitutional right [for] our states. It's one that is working. There is negligible fraud, and we shouldn't change it, because you think you're going to get one more zero on that one ten-thousandth of 1% and disenfranchise millions of voters.

I do not want the Department of Homeland Security acquiring more information on us. I do not want the General Post Office holding ballots without postmarking them. I want our country to believe in free and fair elections. It is how we move forward. The President of the United States tonight should listen as my guest tonight is the Secretary of State from Washington whose vote-by-mail system is unparalleled in its ability to get the vote out and to be accurate, even in the closest of elections.

And we do catch fraud, and we do match systems against voters and information about them, so the system works. So please, please, let us not tonight forget that voting in our country is a constitutional right upheld and pursued by our states. Let's keep that system. Let's turn down the SAVE [America] act. Let's move our country forward with more participation in our elections, again by United States citizens in the system that has delivered for us today. I thank the President and I yield the floor.