



**U.S. Senator
Maria Cantwell
Washington**

SNAPSHOT REPORT:
**Attacks on the State of Washington's Tradition of
Secure, Accessible Voting**

The State of Washington has built a reputation over decades as one of the easiest places in the country to vote, while still maintaining high turnout and secure elections. We have done that by successfully pairing universal vote-by-mail, prepaid ballots, and same-day registration with strong safeguards like signature verification and centralized ballot tracking

Washington's model system has a long tradition of treating broad participation as a civic norm that transcends party labels. Both Democratic and Republican secretaries of state helped shepherd the transition to all-mail elections statewide by 2011, demonstrating bipartisan confidence that more convenient voting could coexist with strong security checks. In fact, while many red-leaning states passed laws restricting access to the ballot in the past few years, Washington enacted laws expanding ballot access. That record matches what Washingtonians have come to expect: a system where higher turnout is seen as evidence of a healthy democracy, not a problem to be solved.

Unfortunately, in an apparent effort to suppress turnout in ways that run counter to the values of Washingtonians, the Trump administration and many federally elected Republican members of Congress are attacking our elections on several fronts. If successful, it will be more difficult for Washingtonians to vote and voters' information will be less secure. Here are some of the ways our elections are under assault:

1. President Trump issued an [executive order in March 2025](#) that sought, among other things, to withhold funding from states like Washington that count ballot received after Election Day -- even if they were postmarked by Election Day.
2. Trump's Justice Department is [suing 24 states and the District of Columbia -- including our state](#) -- in an attempt to force state officials to give the administration our voting rolls, which include personal data that Washingtonians didn't agree to make public.
3. Under the Trump Administration, the U.S. Postal Service issued a rule stating that [postmarks no longer need to match the date that an item was mailed](#). So if you mail your ballot on Election Day -- or even days before -- it could be rendered invalid by a post-Election-Day postmark.
4. The Republican National Committee is challenging in court the election administration practices of states like Washington that permit the counting of mail ballots that are postmarked by Election Day to be counted when they are received within a certain number of days after Election Day. The Supreme Court will hear arguments in that important case, *Watson v. Republican National Committee*, this spring.
5. And House Republicans are pushing the SAVE America Act, a "show your papers" mandate that would require Americans to present, in person, either a passport or birth certificate to election officials in order to register to vote or change anything on their registration, like a name or address.

The argument Republicans make to impose these requirements is that there is widespread voter fraud. This claim doesn't hold up to the facts. The conservative Heritage Foundation, which tracks voter fraud, found just 15 cases of voter fraud in Washington state between 1982 and 2025. That's a rate of about one case in the entire state every three years. In that same 43-year period, they found only 1,620 cases nationwide. That's an average of only about three dozen cases across the entire country per year. By comparison, about 154 million Americans voted in the 2024 election.

This report details the burdens that these efforts would place on Washingtonians who now enjoy the safety and convenience of our vote-by-mail system.

The Bureaucratic Burden of the SAVE America Act

The SAVE America Act will require voters to present proof of citizenship in person at election offices when registering or re-registering to vote. The documents that can prove one's citizenship are **a U.S. passport** or an **original or certified copy of a birth certificate that matches the name on the person's ID**.

According to the Center for American Progress, approximately 2.8 million citizens in Washington do not have a passport. In addition, about 1.6 million women in Washington state who have taken their spouse's name do not have a birth certificate matching their legal name.

Sen. Cantwell's office identified:

- How much these new requirements could cost Washingtonians
- A new analysis showing the incredible long drives Washingtonians could face to get to their own county's election office
- After discussion with election experts, case studies of the paperwork burdens that the SAVE America Act would place on specific types of Washingtonians.

Costs of Obtaining Required Documentation

Anyone who doesn't have an original copy of their birth certificate would need to order a certified copy to make changes to their registration, or present a passport.

The cost of a **passport** for first-time adult applicants **is \$165**, plus any fees for getting passport photos. Moreover, according to the State Department, current processing times to obtain a passport average between four and six weeks. "Expedited" service can reduce that to between two and three weeks, but requires an additional \$60 fee. An applicant can also request one- to three-day delivery in addition to the expedited service, but at an additional cost of \$22.05. A person who had a U.S. passport in the past, but is unable to submit it as evidence of their U.S. citizenship along with their application must pay an additional \$150 "file search" fee.

This is the cost to order a certified **birth certificate** in Washington's five most populous counties.

County	Cost
King	\$28.50 (in person); \$29 (via mail); \$42.50 (online) https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/dph/certificates-permits-licenses/order-birth-certificate
Pierce	\$33 (via mail); \$39 (in person); \$48.50 (online) https://tpchd.org/info/birth-and-death-records/

Snohomish	\$28.50 (in person); \$41.50 (online); \$42 (via mail); https://www.snohd.org/300/Birth-Certificates
Spokane	\$35 (mail); \$40 (in person); \$43 (online) https://tpchd.org/info/birth-and-death-records/
Clark	\$38.50 (in person); \$40 (mail); \$51.50 (online) https://clark.wa.gov/public-health/birth-and-death-certificates

Counties With Longest Drives to the Election Office

The SAVE America Act's requirement of presenting papers in-person to a county elections official would impose another cost for voters registering to vote ahead of an election -- the time of traveling to one's county election office. This would be the case even for those who would later vote by mail. Even King County, the most populous in Washington state, only has one elections office location, in Renton.

For many residents of Washington state, getting to their county's election office could require a two-hour round-trip drive or longer.

County	Furthest Populated Place	Elections Office Location	Round Trip Drive Time in Minutes
Jefferson	Queets	Port Townsend	360
Whatcom	Diablo	Bellingham	260
King	Skykomish	Renton	220
San Juan	Doe Bay	Friday Harbor	200 (ferry ride)
Pierce	Ashford	Tacoma	180
Clallam	La Push	Port Angeles	170
Stevens	Wellpinit	Colville	170
Douglas	Coulee Dam	Waterville	150
Klickitat	Trout Lake	Goldendale	150
Lewis	Silver Brook	Chehalis	150
Pend Oreille	Metaline Falls	Newport	150
Skagit	Marblemount	Mt. Vernon	150
Cowlitz	Yale	Kelso	140
Adams	Othello	Ritzville	130
Benton	Whitcomb	Kennewick	130
Grant	Grand Coulee	Ephrata	130
Kittitas	Snoqualmie Pass	Ellensburg	130
Pacific	Ocean Park	South Bend	130

Snohomish	Index	Everett	130
Chelan	Chelan	Wenatchee	120
Grays Harbor	Neilton	Montesano	120
Kitsap	Hansville	Port Orchard	120
Walla Walla	Ayer	Walla Walla	120
Ferry	Keller	Republic	110
Franklin	Kahlotus	Pasco	110
Okanogan	Oroville	Okanogan	110
Spokane	Elk	Spokane	110
Clark	Amboy	Vancouver	100
Lincoln	Odessa	Davenport	100
Mason	Triton	Shelton	100
Yakima	Mabton	Yakima	100
Island	Clinton	Coupeville	80
Thurston	Rainier	Tumwater	70
Wahkiakum	Deep River	Cathlamet	70
Whitman	Pampa	Colfax	70
Columbia	Starbuck	Dayton	60
Garfield	Peola	Pomeroy	56
Asotin	Anatone	Asotin	50
Skamania	Prindle	Stevenson	50

CASE STUDY: A Young Person Who Recently Moved Within Washington State

Required Task	Current Options & Documentation Required	Options Under SAVE America Act & Documentation Required
Change address on voter registration	Update address via online form, or print form and send via mail. No additional documentation required.	Travel in-person to meet with county elections official. Must present original birth certificate or certified copy, or valid passport.

CASE STUDY: Married Woman With Spouse's Last Name

Required Task	Current Options & Documentation Required	Options Under SAVE America Act & Documentation Required
Any change to voter registration	Update name via online form, or print form and send via mail. No additional documentation required.	Travel in-person to meet with county elections officials. Must sign affidavit attesting to name change.

CASE STUDY: Rural Washingtonian

Required Task	Current Options & Documentation Required	Options Under SAVE America Act & Documentation Required
Any change to voter registration	Update via online form, or print form and send via mail. No additional documentation required.	Travel potentially long distance to meet with county elections official. Must present original birth certificate or certified copy, or valid passport.

A New Paperwork Burden No Washingtonian Wants

Currently, most counties only have one election office, and that office is only open during business hours. For many Washingtonians, a visit to an elections office would be a new and unwanted burden. The rush to make changes just before an election would be an extraordinary burden on election officials and voters who may have to wait in long lines.

For many Washingtonians – from the second shift worker, to the stay-at-home mom, to an agricultural worker who spends long days on the farm or in the field, to the tech worker who works 10-12 hour days - carving out an hour or much more to drive to an elections office would be disruptive, if not impossible.

These challenges would only be compounded for anyone without access to a car, or is disabled or elderly, since the trip could be even longer and more challenging. For example, the [fastest public transit route from downtown Seattle to King County's Renton elections office](#) takes nearly an hour and requires walking more than a mile. Those in rural areas may not even have a transit option.

In Washington state, we have always stood for making voting secure, easy, and accessible. Layering new federal mandated Georgia- or Texas-style barriers onto Washington's already secure and high-participation system does not align with the lived experience of Washington voters, who appreciate and depend on getting a ballot in the mail, having ample time to return it, and trusting that election officials are focused on both access and integrity—not looking for new ways to keep people away from the ballot box.

Addendum: Postmarked Ballots Counted After Election Day, 2020-2025

Under Washington state law, as in the majority of states, mail-in ballots that arrive after Election Day are counted so long as they are postmarked on or before the date of the election – the so-called “mailbox rule.” With nearly 47 million people – almost a third of all voters nationwide – casting their ballots by mail in the 2024 election, prohibiting this safe and longstanding practice could disenfranchise many voters in Washington state and across the country. The following tables show how many Washington voters statewide, and in select counties, would have had their ballots disqualified under President Trump’s proposed change to the rule.

Statewide

Year	Votes Cast	Votes Received After 8pm on Election Day	Percentage of Total
2020	4,116,894	201,155	4.89%
2021	1,896,481	110,682	5.84%
2022	3,067,686	139,089	4.53%
2023	1,758,084	126,831	7.21%
2024	3,961,569	127,083	3.21%
2025	2,001,425	103,266	5.16%
TOTAL	16,802,139	808,106	4.81%

King County

Year	Votes Cast	Votes Received After 8pm on Election Day	Percentage of Total
2020	1,231,064	47,981	3.90%
2021	615,907	33,538	5.45%
2022	911,329	34,005	3.73%
2023	522,615	35,307	6.76%
2024	1,155,348	26,866	2.33%
2025	659,974	27,249	4.13%
TOTAL	5,096,237	204,946	4.02%

Clark County

Year	Votes Cast	Votes Received After 8pm on Election Day	Percentage of Total
2020	277,874	3,004	1.08%
2021	114,214	12,002	10.51%

2022	208,915	6,444	3.08%
2023	89,360	1,849	2.07%
2024	281,471	9,547	3.39%
2025	123,937	6,957	5.61%
TOTAL	1,095,771	39,803	3.63%