

Voter Empowerment Act of 2015 (H.R. 12)

Voter Registration Modernization Act of 2015

Amends the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA) to require each state to make available official public websites for online voter registration.

Authorizes automated voter registration of certain individuals and establishes other initiatives to promote voter registration, such as same day registration and voter registration of individuals under 18 years of age.

Amends the federal criminal code to prohibit hindering, interfering with, or preventing voter registration.

Amends the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) to establish requirements for states to promote access to voter registration and voting for individuals with disabilities, including a single office for providing related information.

Directs the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to make grants to eligible states to conduct pilot programs enabling individuals with disabilities to register to vote and vote privately and independently at their own residences (including by telephone).

Amends HAVA to reauthorize the program of grants to state and local governments to assure voting access for individuals with disabilities.

Amends the federal criminal code to prohibit state or local election officials from preventing an individual from registering or voting in any federal election (voter caging), or from permitting a formal challenge under state law to an individual's registration status or eligibility to vote, if the basis for such decision is evidence consisting of: (1) a voter caging document or voter caging list, (2) an unverified match list, (3) an error or omission on voter application or registration documents that is not material to an individual's eligibility to vote, or (4) any other evidence so designated by the Commission.

Amends the federal criminal code to prohibit a person, including an election official, from knowingly and willfully attempting to or depriving or defrauding the residents of a state of their free and fair exercise of the right to vote by the communication of election-related information that is known by the person to be materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent. Increases the penalty for voter intimidation.

Declares that the right of an individual U.S. citizen to vote in any federal election shall not be denied or abridged because that individual has been convicted of a criminal offense unless he or she is serving a felony sentence in a correctional institution at the time of the election. Prescribes enforcement of this right by public or private civil action.

Requires each state to notify in writing any individual convicted of a criminal offense under state law, upon release from state custody or upon sentence to probation, that he or she has the right to vote in a federal election and so may register to vote.

Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act of 2015

Amends HAVA to revise requirements for the audit capacity of voting systems, particularly those for a permanent paper record.

Requires the voting system to require the use of an individual, durable, voter-verified paper ballot of the voter's vote that shall be marked and made available for inspection by the voter before the voter's vote is cast and counted, and which shall be counted by hand or read by an optical character recognition device or other counting device. Requires the voting system to provide the voter with an opportunity to correct any system-made error in the voter-verified paper ballot before it is permanently preserved.

Requires the Director of the National Science Foundation (NSF) to make grants to eligible entities to study, test, and develop accessible ballot voting, verification, and casting mechanisms and devices and best practices to enhance the accessibility of paper ballot voting and verification mechanisms for individuals with disabilities, for voters whose primary language is not English, and for voters with difficulties in literacy.

Requires each state, except when the winning candidate had no opponent or received 80% or more of the votes, to administer audits of federal election results, without advance notice to the precincts selected, consisting of random hand counts of the voter-verified paper ballots.

Requires the Election Auditor of a state, as soon as practicable after the completion of an audit, to submit the results to EAC for publication.

Prohibits certification of the results of any election until completion of audits.

Amends HAVA to: (1) add requirements for counting provisional ballots, (2) require each state to allow early voting and facilitate the ability of voters to vote by mail.

Amends the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to extend the guarantee of voting residency to family members of absent military personnel.

Amends the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act with respect to pre-election reports on availability and transmission of absentee ballots.

Revises the 45-day absentee ballot transmission rule.

Permits use of a single absentee ballot application for subsequent elections.

Entitles to leave a federal employee who serves as a poll worker.

Directs the EAC to: (1) make a grant to each eligible state for poll-worker recruitment and training, and (2) develop materials for a model state poll worker training program.

Amends HAVA to make available to any person aggrieved by a violation of uniform and nondiscriminatory election technology and administration requirements the option to file a complaint with the Attorney General or pursue a private right of action to enforce such requirements.

Amends the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to make it unlawful for a chief state election administration official, unless he or she or a family member is a candidate, to take an active part in political management or in a political campaign for federal office over which such official has supervisory authority.

Amends NVRA to treat universities as voter registration agencies.

Amends HAVA to establish minimum notification requirements on behalf of voters affected by polling place changes.

Directs the Attorney General to: (1) coordinate the establishment of a state-based response system for responding to questions and complaints from individuals voting or seeking to vote, or registering to vote or seeking to, in federal elections; (2) establish and operate a toll-free telephone service to connect directly to such response system; and (3) appoint a Voter Hotline Task Force.

Makes requirements of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 and HAVA applicable to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Amends HAVA to: (1) reauthorize and extend the EAC, and (2) repeal its exemption from certain government contracting requirements.

End Racial Profiling Act of 2015 (H.R. 1933)

Prohibits any law enforcement agent or agency from engaging in racial profiling. Grants the United States or an individual injured by racial profiling the right to obtain declaratory or injunctive relief.

Requires federal law enforcement agencies to maintain adequate policies and procedures to eliminate racial profiling and to cease existing practices that permit racial profiling.

Requires state or local governmental entities or state, local, or tribal law enforcement agencies that apply for grants under the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program and the Cops on the Beat Program to certify that they maintain adequate policies and procedures for eliminating racial profiling and have eliminated any existing practices that permit or encourage racial profiling.

Authorizes the Attorney General to award grants and contracts for the collection of data relating to racial profiling and for the development of best practices and systems to eliminate racial profiling. Requires the Attorney General to issue regulations for the collection and compilation of data on racial profiling and for the implementation of this Act.

Proprietary Education Oversight Coordination Improvement Act (H.R. 747)

Establishes the *Proprietary Education Oversight Coordination Committee* to:

- coordinate federal oversight of proprietary institutions of higher education (IHEs);
- coordinate federal activities to protect students from unfair, deceptive, abusive, unethical, fraudulent, or predatory practices, policies, or procedures of proprietary IHEs;
- encourage information sharing among federal agencies regarding federal investigations, audits, or inquiries of such IHEs;
- increase coordination and cooperation between federal and state agencies to improve oversight and accountability of proprietary IHEs; and
- develop best practices and consistency among federal and state agencies in the dissemination of consumer information regarding such IHEs.

Requires the Committee to: (1) meet at least once each quarter of each fiscal year; and (2) meet at least once each fiscal year, and otherwise interact regularly, with state attorneys general, state approval agencies, veterans service organizations, and consumer advocates.

Directs the Committee to submit, and make publicly available, an annual report to Congress that includes: (1) recommendations for legislative and administrative actions the Committee deems necessary to improve the enforcement of applicable federal laws, increase the accountability of proprietary IHEs to students and taxpayers, and ensure the promotion of quality education programs; and (2) specified financial and consumer information regarding such IHEs.

Requires the Committee, each academic year, to publish the For-Profit College Warning List for Parents and Students, which is to be comprised of proprietary IHEs:

- that have engaged in illegal activity during the previous academic year as determined by a federal or state court;
- that have entered into a settlement resulting in a monetary payment;
- that have had any higher education program withdrawn or suspended; or

- for which the Committee has sufficient evidence of widespread or systemic unfair, deceptive, abusive, unethical, fraudulent, or predatory practices, policies, or procedures that threaten the academic success, financial security, or general best interest of students.
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Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act

- The passing of the Financial Aid Simplification and Transparency Act (S. 108) which includes:
 - o Simplifying the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form to make it more accessible for students to apply for federal student aid.
 - o Streamlining federal aid programs to have one grant, the Pell Grant, one undergraduate loan, one graduate loan, and one parent loan.
 - The passing of the Repay Act (S. 85) which includes:
 - o Setting a student's annual repayment obligation under the program at 10% of the borrower's dictionary income that is less than \$25,000, adjusted for inflation. If the borrower's income is greater than \$25,000 it is 15%.
 - o Makes public service employees eligible for the public service employee loan forgiveness program.
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Pell Grant Protection Act (H.R. 1956)

This bill amends title IV (Student Assistance) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to appropriate for each fiscal year beginning with FY 2016 the funding necessary to provide each eligible student with the maximum Pell Grant amount, minus the student's expected family contribution. (Currently, funds for the Pell Grant program come from a combination of mandatory and discretionary spending. This bill converts the Pell Grant program into a mandatory spending program.)

Year-Round Pell Grant Restoration Act (H.R. 1958)

This bill amends title IV (Student Assistance) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to require the Department of Education to award an additional Pell Grant to a student who has received a Pell Grant for an award year and is enrolled in a program of study for payment periods during the same award year that are not covered by the Pell Grant. The total amount of the Pell Grants awarded to such a student for the award year may exceed the total maximum Pell Grant.

Pell Grant Cost of Tuition Adjustment Act (H.R. 1957)

This bill amends title IV (Student Assistance) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to set the maximum Pell Grant at a specified amount, increased for inflation each year, plus any additional amount specified in the last enacted appropriation Act.

Federal Dream Act (HR 1959)