

organization that holds all of us accountable, and they basically do not like the SAVE Act.

This is why part of this effort is about protecting States and protecting our rights. As I said, our constitutional Fathers have basically said: This is what we should be doing, and this is why, here now, turning this over, I object to the fact that the Homeland Security is going to collect personal information demanding that a secretary of state turn that personal information over to them for a massive database by the Federal Government. I object to that.

I am not turning personal information over to people who just have other things to pursue. Or maybe it is going to be like DOGE, and they are going to sell it to other organizations and make money off of our personal information. I object to that.

But now, if basically a secretary of state or an auditor basically doesn't agree with Homeland Security, what are they going to do? This bill also has a private right of action to say that you can sue them on a private right of action. So now, we are going to create all of this chaos and mischief at a level when somehow Homeland Security, which they have gotten it wrong before on the vote, on information about who and what information—the Federal Government has got it wrong before—now all of a sudden, you are going to get it wrong again and what are you going to do?

So as I mentioned, Sam Reed, he is not the only Republican I have talked to. We had a Republican on a press conference today who was an auditor. There are Republicans standing up.

I don't see any Democrats agreeing with you on the SAVE Act, but I see lots of Republicans across America agreeing with us that it is a bad bill.

But as Sam Reed said, former Republican secretary of state:

Neither the President nor Congress should be in the business of micromanaging elections.

Why? Why? It has never been given to us.

But let's talk about this. My colleague seems to think that there is a trend going in some direction. OK. What is the trend? Because the Heritage Foundation, a group I am pretty sure you believe in, pretty sure you quote them a lot, basically said in my State since 1982—since 1982 till now—there have been 15 cases of voter fraud.

OK. In our State, in the State of Washington, 15 cases. OK. So hardly—hardly, a big trend moving in the other direction. Hardly a big trend.

Similarly, the Heritage Foundation found that in the United States of America, that noncitizen voter fraud is basically .00007, so that turns out to be seven-millionths of a percent. It is not 1 percent. It is not .1 percent. It is basically .00007. So seven-millionths of 1 percent voter fraud in the United States of America based on the system that we have today.

And you want to propose a system that would disenfranchise millions of Americans by making it more complicated. And, yes, I don't know why you don't want to stand up for vote-by-mail, but trust me, I am standing up for vote-by-mail. Your last election had 84 percent turnout in the State of Utah. You had 90 percent in 2020. I think that is a prideful thing for a State.

I am prideful that our State has one of the highest turnouts too. It is not probably 83 percent in a Presidential election. I don't remember exactly what it was in the year 2000, but that is what we strive for in the United States of America, a voting system where everybody participates so when the outcome is something that other people don't like, you can at least say the American people decided.

But if all of a sudden you start sowing doubt into the system, then you have a problem; and that is where President Trump is. He is saying he wants to eliminate mail-in voting, but one in three voters in this country use it.

He is the one who is inspiring my colleagues to write this legislation. He is the one who is inspiring the details. He would go much further, I agree, than what the SAVE Act is.

But let's hear what third parties are saying around the United States of America.

Let's hear what editorial boards who read the same judgment, the same discussions that we have had here, and what have they said?

In my home State, where we have had one of the closest elections in a congressional district, they basically said the SAVE Act is a threat to our democracy.

What did the Seattle Times say? It said, "Congress should reject SAVE Act as unconstitutional voter suppression."

That is not Democrats saying that; that is a newspaper saying that.

What did they say in the Maine Herald?

Maine Voters do not wish to be "saved" by the SAVE Act.

So now we know that third-party validators—who are pretty expert in voting. Women Voters don't want this. Newspapers that basically have looked at this issue are also calling this for what it is: suppression. And I ask my colleagues to turn this down.

Now, if my colleague wants to continue to debate, I will stand here as long as he wants to stand here to debate this issue. I will stand here and get more facts and figures to show him that this voting system today has empowered Americans, it has increased opportunities for Americans to have their votes cast, and it has gotten rid of generations of suppression that existed before. But if he wants me to talk about all of the voter suppression that has existed in the United States, starting with laws that basically disenfranchise various segments of our popu-

lation, I am happy to talk about them because every generation should be about fighting to get the voters to cast a vote, have a robust democracy, and distinguish the United States of America from other countries as a beacon of democracy where free and fair elections stand and where we are confident about the results.

We don't need the SAVE Act. It will cause chaos. What we need to do is to continue to fight for democracy and continue the path forward for a vote-by-mail system.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

SAVE AMERICA ACT

Mr. LEE. Madam President, I appreciate the skill and the passion that my friend and colleague the distinguished Senator from the State of Washington brings to the table on this. I appreciate her thoroughness in making the case that she has made to the Senate. I would like to address a few of those items which I think call for a response.

One of the arguments that she points to—all of the arguments that she points to in one way or another—reminds me of how important it is to turn back to the central objective of what we are trying to achieve here: Let's make it easy to vote but hard to cheat.

Again and again, she refers to the desire to make it easy to vote, but as to the "hard to cheat" point, she goes off on a number of tangents, and I would like to address a number of those right now to make sure we set the record clear.

One of the arguments she makes right out of the gate has to do with the fact that this is a constitutionally protected right, and she is right there. We have a number of freestanding constitutional protections in various parts of the Constitution that protect your right to vote.

The fact that it is a constitutionally protected right doesn't mean that it doesn't matter that we make it easy to vote and hard to cheat. In fact, it makes it that much more important to do it.

The fact that something is a constitutionally protected right doesn't mean that it has to be uninhibited. In fact, very often, as is the case with voting, if we make it easy to cheat, then your constitutionally protected right to vote will mean less and less with each passing election, and our failure to take these risks seriously further undermines the public's perception of the legitimacy of the rights in question.

Now, the mere fact that something is a constitutionally protected right doesn't mean you can't make it harder for people to break the law in gaining access to it. Otherwise, there would be all sorts of things that would be off in our society.

Take for example the Second Amendment, the right to bear arms. Yes, we

have a constitutionally protected right to bear arms, and it is a fundamental right that is available to individuals. Yet, when you decide to exercise that right by going into a federally licensed firearms dealer to purchase a firearm, guess what you have to do? You have to produce identification, and you have to wait a period of time. It might take a few minutes or it might take a few hours, but you have to wait until they run your identification and your information through some databases to make sure you are eligible to purchase a gun. It still is a constitutionally protected right. It doesn't cease to be a constitutionally protected right simply by virtue of doing that.

Never in a million years would you see my colleagues on the other side of the aisle or many in my party, I assume, saying: OK. This is all we need to do in order to deal with this issue since the right to bear arms is protected by the Constitution.

Yes, we have laws about who may purchase what firearm and when and under what circumstance and when they might be disqualified based on a prior conviction or otherwise from purchasing a firearm. All we need is a signature because, according to my colleague's logic, a signature is all the identification you need.

Well, is it? Well, signatures can be forged. With increasing ease, they can be forged. In other circumstances, they can be presumed not to be checked, and in some cases, that might pan out to be more true than in others.

But nobody would seriously suggest—particularly those who like these background check laws—they wouldn't be content with somebody just signing their name even if it said: I hereby declare under penalty of perjury that I am entitled to purchase this firearm, that I am an adult, that I am a U.S. citizen, and that I have not been convicted of a felony offense which would disqualify me under 18 USC section 922(g); nor do I trigger any of the other exclusionary factors articulated in various subsections of 922(g) or under any other Federal law.

The signature wouldn't do it there, and that is a constitutionally protected right.

This is a constitutionally protected right, but we are still making it, yes, easy to vote and hard to cheat. You have to have both. You don't get that if you have a mere signature.

It is so, too, with the purchase of alcohol or tobacco by minors. Even if you had people sign something saying, "I hereby attest by signing this under penalty of perjury that I am, in fact, entitled to purchase alcohol; I am, in fact, at least 21 years old"—we wouldn't do that. Why? Well, it would be really hard to enforce the law at that point.

When we turn to the examples—and I tried to count the number of times she said it, but I think she said "very, very, very, very, very, very little fraud in elections." OK. I understand

that. Election fraud is extremely difficult to detect and therefore is rarely prosecuted. There have been very few cases of voter fraud actually having been discovered—detected—and prosecuted through to completion. Well, likewise, with other laws, if all you were required to do was to check a box and sign your name, there would be a lot of other instances of legal wrongdoing that would also be very hard to detect if that would be all you had to provide.

We have this known vulnerability in our laws here, and Heaven help us all if we don't acknowledge the vulnerabilities that we face and take reasonable steps to close those loopholes.

The fact that we are requiring documents here—yes, it adds a step. Now, there are a couple of things I need to be clear about.

No. 1, if you are already registered to vote, this doesn't undo your existing voter registration. We are not going to make hundreds of millions of Americans who are already registered to vote go back and start the process over again—that wouldn't make any sense—but it would apply to new voter registrations. If you move or if you register to vote in a new State or a new precinct and you have to establish a new voter registration file after this becomes law, then, yes, you would have to do that.

But, again, if you are an American who has ever had a job anywhere or who has started any new job at any point in your career with a new employer, you have already had to supply the same documentation. In fact, you have had to supply a much more rigid set of documents than what this requires because this, unlike that, allows you to prove it even if you have not a single document—not a single one of those.

Again, going back to page 12, line 22, and the sentences and paragraphs that follow, it makes it abundantly clear. Even if you are missing all of it, we have taken that into account, and we can put the onus back on the State to go back and prove you wrong. That is very different than just checking a box and signing your name.

Even if it does have some warnings attached to it, that is very different than having to supply the necessary information about how and where you were born. If you are a natural-born citizen, meaning if you were a U.S. citizen as of the moment of your birth, based on the circumstances surrounding your birth—either born on U.S. soil or born elsewhere to U.S. citizen parents—then you have to establish that. That is very different than simply checking a box and signing your name.

Yes, signing your name can be used to identify a person under some circumstances, but it is a lot less information than we are required to provide elsewhere.

She then makes this about what she refers to as States' rights. I don't like

to use that term because I think it is a misnomer. It also conjures images of a bygone Jim Crow era in which the Democratic Party subjected substantial swaths of the American population to a set of racist, evil, exclusionary laws. It has a George Wallace connotation to it that I don't like.

Besides that, States don't have rights; they have authority. "Authority" is sort of the inverse polar opposite of a right. It is the ying to the yang that is a right. States have authority; people have rights. Rights are a check on authority, and that is what we are talking about here.

Regardless of whatever you want to call that—State sovereign authority, federalism, whatever you want to call it—it is not implicated here.

Remember, this objection is coming from the same party that, no less than 5 years ago, through a vehicle that, in the Congress empaneled between 2021 and 2023, was run by Democrats during a Democratic administration, under the auspices of a bill commonly known at the time as H.R. 1, tried to undertake a wholesale takeover of our Federal voting and election system.

Among other things, it would have subjected every voting jurisdiction in the United States to the status that today we equate only with section 5 jurisdictions. What that means is, anytime any voting jurisdiction in the United States anywhere—no matter how large or small, whether Tribal, local, State, or otherwise—wanted to redistrict, they would have to go to a political appointee at the U.S. Department of Justice and obtain preclearance. It is a "Mother, may I?" of sorts from Uncle Sam and Aunt Sam. It is something that is as fundamentally un-American, something as fundamentally contrary to federalism as we know it. This is the same party that is now making the federalism objection to this.

While we are on this Federal objection to this, let's remember the whole reason this is necessary in the first place is because of an existing Federal law passed in 1993 by Congress—the National Voter Registration Act. So the whole reason it is necessary to begin with is because of an existing Federal law.

Don't tell me this is an insult to federalism, especially if you are one of those people from that party who supported a wholesale takeover of our entire electoral system as recently as 4 or 5 years ago.

None of us should be surprised that leftist media establishments in the mainstream news media have come out against this because, let's face it, they are leftists; they are hardcore Democrats. Of course they don't want this, and of course they use this inflammatory language in their headlines.

"Ah, this is a threat to our democracy everywhere." "This will disenfranchise 21 million American voters." Do you want to change that sentence to make it correct? Well, it could

be a whole lot of people who are not citizens. The only people we don't want voting are those who are not citizens and are not eligible to vote. That is all this does—easy to vote, hard to cheat—using documentary standards that are far more generous, far more flexible, and far more easy to comply with than any other system we have access to.

You can still do it. You can still satisfy this standard of proving citizenship even if all your documents have suddenly disappeared. You supply the necessary information under oath, under penalty of perjury, and then it becomes the State's burden to either confirm or refute those things, but with this specificity, we find it a lot easier to prevent fraud.

As far as chilling voter activity, we have data from a number of different studies showing that in States that have adopted voter ID laws, you don't drive down voter participation. In some cases, it goes up. It works out perfectly well.

We need not, we ought not, we must not fear this. If we fear this particular issue, we risk running afoul of that which we hold most dear about our electoral system.

Sometimes we get confused about what we ought to fear. We see this in nature. We fear the snake. We don't fear the deer. Yet, a few years ago, my wife and I were having this conversation. I don't know how we got off on this tangent, but we decided to look up your chances of dying as a result of an interaction with a rattlesnake as compared to your chances of dying as a result of an interaction with a deer.

Now, deer are cute. Who doesn't love Bambi and Bambi's mom and Bambi's dad? You know, it is all so great.

Your chances are way higher of being killed by Bambi than they are by a rattlesnake. Yet we fear the rattlesnake because it is creepy and it is scary.

When we fear the wrong things, we leave ourselves vulnerable to that which can harm us.

And perhaps we don't fear enough what happens when our elections lose their credibility because we don't take reasonable safeguards to make sure that only those who are legally entitled to vote in them are, in fact, allowed to vote.

So as far as the private right of action goes, that private right of action exists under previously enacted laws. I believe that one applies as a result of the original NVRA, and, possibly, some of it could be under the Help America Vote Act. But there are existing Federal laws that make that exact private right of action available, and all this does is it extends it to the obligations that arise under the SAVE America Act.

And those, too, are generous. They are generous to those State officials that are complying with them. If somebody identifies a problem with the way that the law is being implemented, if they are not complying with the terms of the SAVE America Act, there is a notice requirement to the State elections official in question. And it gives a certain period of time. I don't remember whether it is 30, 60, or 90 days. I think some of it may depend on the exact context. They have the ability to cure the harm or make the argument back as to why they are not, in fact, violating it.

So there is nothing scary about this private right of action. It is just a way of, without growing the bureaucracy, making sure that there is a means by which you can procure a court order requiring compliance with the law so that it doesn't become dead letter.

Look, on personal information—the Department of Homeland Security wielding personal information—well, if that is the case, there are all kinds of things. And if that is on the table—I mean, a lot of Americans don't much like how much personal information the IRS has, and that gets leaked sometimes. A lot of people don't like

how much personal information can be found in the databases that are used in connection with the background checks that one has to go through when purchasing a gun.

That is just the beginning of it. There are all kinds of things where people are not comfortable with the government having access to too much information. Look, I get it. I am one of those people. I don't like it either.

But the fact is the government does have that information. Why not allow the government to use that information lawfully to make sure that those who have a particular right are the only ones who are allowed to wield it, so that it doesn't get cheapened or diluted or bastardized by those who would flagrantly violate the law.

At the end of the day, this is, in fact, about making it easy to vote and hard to cheat.

The Democrats in this Chamber seem, so far, to be very comfortable with the first half of that equation but not the second half. We have to pay attention to both. We ignore either to our own detriment and the detriment of those we represent.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 12 noon tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 11:04 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, March 18, 2026, at 12 noon.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate March 17, 2026:

THE JUDICIARY

ANNA ST. JOHN, OF LOUISIANA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA.