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Voter ID requirements: the new Jim Crow laws

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I have been watching with alarm as various states in this country enact new laws to restrict voting. They include, but are not limited to, Texas, Virginia, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Georgia, Nebraska and Mississippi.

The authors of these laws claim to be rectifying voter fraud. But the problem with that argument is this: Voter fraud is a virtually nonexistent problem.

If we have any problems with voting in this country, it's that not enough people vote. We need to make voting easier, not harder.

In spite of this, state legislatures have enacted laws that require voters to show a photo ID, which is fine if you have a driver's license, but many poor and elderly people do not. Alternatively, they require some kind of identification, which costs money to obtain.

Now, if this were a country where all citizens carried a photo ID, no problem. But it isn't. So these laws disproportionately affect the poor, racial and ethnic minorities, students and the elderly. Guess which political party usually gets the majority of votes from these groups? The Democrats. And which party is pushing the voter ID laws everywhere? The Republicans.

In fact, this is so blatant that the majority leader of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, Mike Turzai, actually said out loud -- in front of microphones and cameras -- what is surely being said behind the scenes in conservative circles. Listing the recent measures passed by the GOP-controlled Pennsylvania legislature, he said: "Voter ID, which is going to allow Gov. Romney to win the state of Pennsylvania -- done."

Election strategies are one thing, but enacting voting laws for the purpose of eliminating voters in order to swing an election is quite another. This is blatant injustice, and it needs to be named -- and opposed -- as such. It is nothing but Jim Crow with a broader profile.

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