



STATE OF MINNESOTA
Office of Minnesota Secretary of State
Steve Simon

Testimony of The Honorable Steve Simon, Minnesota Secretary of State
U.S. Senate Rules Committee Democrats Spotlight Hearing
“Protecting the Future of American Democracy: An Examination of Trump and
Partisan Attacks on Voting and Elections.” May 14, 2025

Thank you, Ranking Member Padilla and Rules Committee Democrats, for convening this meeting. I’m Steve Simon, Minnesota’s Secretary of State. As the chief election official for the state, I like to say I am in the democracy business.

Minnesotans take great pride in our elections, and I never miss a chance to say that we most often number one in the nation in voter turnout. We believe Minnesota has struck the right balance between accessibility and security.

As for accessibility: Voter registration is one of many examples. Eligible voters can register to vote online, by mail, in-person at their local election office, or in-person at their polling place on election day.

As for security: We have extensive measures in place before, during, and after election day. Our digital statewide voter registration system is updated daily and cross-checked with data on voters that we receive from other states, the federal government, and other government offices in Minnesota. Local election officials use this system to verify that voters are who they say they are, live where they say they live, and have only voted once.

I want to be very clear - we are confident in our election administration in Minnesota.

Recently – the U.S. House has passed legislation that would upend elections administration in this country. HR 22 – known as the SAVE Act – poses the one of the greatest threats to the freedom to vote in our lifetime.

I have been speaking out on this topic for the past several months – and I am not alone. My colleagues from across the country have also been sounding the alarm about SAVE Act.

This legislation would, if enacted, keep millions of eligible Americans from the polls. It would cost states, counties, and cities untold millions of dollars to implement. And it would impose the risk of criminal prosecution for local election workers left trying to sort out how these new federal requirements impact their responsibilities.

It would fundamentally change elections administration in this country overnight – since it would take effect immediately upon enactment.

The stated purpose of the legislation is election security. Election security is vital- and we all agree that only those who are eligible to vote should cast ballots. But the SAVE Act is based on the totally false assumption that huge numbers of non-citizens are voting. There is no evidence of that. In fact, the research shows the opposite is true.

In Minnesota, we have fresh numbers to prove that our elections are secure. In the summer of 2024, a professor at the University of St. Thomas Law School – in St. Paul - published an analysis of this subject. He looked at ten years of Minnesota voting from 2015 to 2024 – during which 13.4 million ballots were cast. The analysis found three examples of non-citizens voting -- all of whom were green card holders.¹

On the other hand, there is compelling evidence that laws requiring people to provide citizenship documentation to register to vote has kept many eligible voters from casting a ballot. Look at Kansas, where in 2011 lawmakers imposed a proof-of-citizenship requirement. Federal courts eventually found the legislation was unconstitutional – but not before 31,000 eligible U.S. Citizens were deprived of their freedom to vote.² For this reason alone, the SAVE Act should never become law.

The SAVE Act isn't our only concern. On March 25 Executive Order on Elections in which the President attempted to bypass Congress and enact part of the SAVE Act on his own. That Executive Order purports to direct an independent agency (the EAC) to change the national mail voter registration form – to require documentary proof of citizenship. Elsewhere, the executive order threatens to withhold funds to states unless they comply with certain demands – including turning over private voter data.

As you know, the executive order is now tied up in court – where Minnesota has joined eighteen other states in arguing that the President simply lacks the legal authority to do what he's trying to do. A court has already issued an injunction covering a major part of the executive order.

¹ Wiebe, Virgil, Needles in Haystacks: Noncitizen Voting Violations in Minnesota (May 23, 2024). U of St. Thomas (Minnesota) Legal Studies Research Paper No. 24-08, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4839678> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4839678>

² Hanna, J. (2024, December 29). When a Kansas law forced voters to prove citizenship, a fiasco followed. *The Associated Press*. <https://apnews.com/article/kansas-noncitizen-voting-proof-of-citizenship-50d56a0b8d1f0fde15480aab3db67f4f>

This comes at a time when states are working to cover more costs and responsibilities as the federal government shows signs of backing away from some election security commitments.

You are no doubt aware of our longstanding partnership with CISA. Earlier this year, this administration put many of our partners at CISA on administrative leave – while calling into question access to critical election security services. We need that security partnership more than ever – as our election system faces continued security threats.

Sadly, election administrators face threats too. Last fall, my office was one of several that had to be evacuated after receiving a package containing white powder from something or someone billing itself as the “U.S. Traitor Elimination Army.” Thankfully, no one was physically harmed. But now is not the time to back away from supporting election officials – or to pass laws that will introduce new chaos, confusion, and exclusion to our election system.

It’s a challenging time to be in the democracy business. Our democracy is being tested. It has been tested before – and it has held. But continuity and success are not inevitable. They come from hard work and commitment. That is why I am here today.

Thank you for your time, your attention.