

# Ken Cuccinelli: Wisconsin Republicans can and should pass S.B. 204

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Just last month, on May 25, the 10-year anniversary of then-governor Scott Walker [signing](#) a groundbreaking voter I.D. law, which has helped to reduce the threat of fraud and increase confidence in fair, secure, and transparent Wisconsin elections, was celebrated. Unfortunately, a decade later, a Republican-controlled Senate committee also rejected key election integrity legislation to help ensure that voter I.D. protections remain viable as mail-in and absentee voting expands in the COVID-19 era.

Americans have the right to be confident that it is easy to vote and hard to cheat in our elections. But this bill, [S.B. 204](#), was voted down on May 28 by the Committee on Elections, Election Process Reform and Ethics. Although Senator Kathleen Bernier, who chairs the committee, cast the deciding vote against the bill, she has acknowledged that mail-in ballots are easier to abuse, and that deterring fraud is critical.

“You just have to deter it [fraud], that is the whole point of election law... The idea is to deter individuals from voting more than once and voting illegally. So, we can do both, we can have election laws and we can still be open, transparent and accessible,” she [told NPR](#). “We want to deter people from cheating.”

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Ensuring voting is easy and accessible cannot come by eliminating voting

safeguards, otherwise confidence in our elections will collapse. Given the significant role absentee voting plays in our elections, it is crucial to have transparent rules in place, so everyone knows what to expect, and to ensure that each vote is legal, is counted accurately, and is verifiable.

Many disenfranchised Americans have lost trust and confidence that every legal voter's voice will be heard. They question whether voting is even worth it anymore, and if they do not believe elected leaders are sufficiently committed to ensuring their vote is protected, why vote at all? Millions of Americans have at least some doubts over the fairness of our electoral process, and this is a colossal problem that cannot be ignored.

Now more than ever, it is incumbent on legislators to help ensure the confidence and certainty of a nation.

Thankfully, there is still hope for S.B. 204. The Senate's rules have allowed Republicans to schedule the bill for an up-or-down floor vote this week, and it is critical that Republican senators now rally together behind this commonsense piece of legislation to salvage it from this disappointing turn in committee. While Governor Tony Evers has made comments opposing S.B. 204, simply stating he will oppose a bill should not end the discussion. He should officially act on it – the people of Wisconsin deserve that.

Importantly, many Wisconsin residents were left with a bad taste in their mouths after [the mistakes](#) of the 2020 election, and S.B. 204 would help address lingering concerns voters have about the mail-in-voting process by closing the loopholes and vulnerabilities that challenged the state in 2020. The bill requires voters casting absentee ballots to prove their identity, restricts the automatic mailing of absentee ballots, and mandates a clear absentee ballot request process.

There is no reason why voting-by-mail should have fewer safeguards than voting-in-person. A consistent voter I.D. requirement ensures that all voters play by the same set of rules.

Efforts to increase election security by requiring a voter I.D. are widely popular in Wisconsin and nationally. Recent [polling](#) from the Honest Elections Project (HEP) shows that 77% of Americans back I.D. requirements, including 62% of Biden voters, 64% of Black voters, and 78% of Hispanic voters.

Opponents in Wisconsin argue that a voter I.D. requirement disenfranchises minority and low-income voters, but those voters vehemently disagree with this claim. Overwhelming majorities of low-income voters (76%), black voters (64%) and Hispanic voters (77%) do not believe that having to show an I.D. to vote is a “burden.” Additionally, Wisconsin [provides a free voter I.D. card](#) for any resident who doesn't have an existing form of I.D. but who wants to vote.

Claims in 2011 that the original Wisconsin voter I.D. law would lead to mass disenfranchisement and voter suppression have not come to fruition. In reality, turnout in 2020 in Wisconsin reached [75.8%](#), which is the highest it has been in decades, and was one of the highest turnout rates in the nation. That is why the current outcry by opponents of S.B. 204 appears overtly political.

It should be easy to vote and hard to cheat in our elections, and S.B. 204 moves Wisconsin closer to this goal by establishing a fair, transparent and more secure process for absentee voting that people can trust. With conservatives in charge of the Senate, there is no reason why this common-sense legislation shouldn't pass on its merits.

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