



## Voting Rights Fact Sheet

September 2024

The Department of Justice is committed to ensuring that every qualified voter can exercise their right to vote free of discrimination or voter intimidation. Congress has enacted laws to safeguard voting rights and has empowered the Department of Justice to enforce them. This fact sheet is a resource for jurisdictions and provides information on certain civil provisions of federal statutes that protect the right to vote. The Department of Justice is authorized to file a civil action seeking preventative relief, including an injunction, against anyone who violates these statutes. This fact sheet does not address criminal provisions of federal statutes that may apply.

**Section 11(b) of the Voting Rights Act:** Section 11(b) of the Voting Rights Act (the Act) broadly prohibits intimidation, threats, and coercion—or attempts to do so—throughout every stage of the voting process, including registering to vote, casting a ballot, and counting votes. It protects not only voters, but also those who help them or who facilitate voting or registering to vote, including election officials and volunteers. The prohibitions apply to both private and government actors. The following are examples of conduct that may violate Section 11(b), depending on the specific facts and context surrounding the conduct: intimidating voters by targeting them based on their race or national origin, surveilling or harassing them, doxing or other invasions of privacy, lodging discriminatory voter challenges to voter eligibility or lodging frivolous challenges without a good faith basis, or sending out through robocalls or other means knowingly false information about the time, place, or manner of voting to prevent people from properly casting their ballots, among others.

**Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act:** A central function of the Voting Rights Act is to bar discrimination. Section 2 of the Act makes it illegal to deny or restrict voting rights because of a citizen's race, color, or membership in a language minority group—defined to include American Indian, Asian American, Alaskan Native, and Spanish heritage citizens. State and local governments cannot use voting practices or election rules that intentionally discriminate or that result in citizens of a particular race, color, or membership in a language minority group having less opportunity than everyone else to register, to vote, and to elect public officials of their choice.



**Section 208 of the Voting Rights Act:** For voters with disabilities and those unable to read or write, Section 208 of the Voting Rights Act guarantees voting assistance in all aspects of the voting process by a person of the voter's choice subject to two exceptions confined to only the voter's employer or union. Section 208 allows voters to choose any assistor who is available and willing. State and local authorities may not impose further restrictions on a voter's choice of an assistor.

**The Americans with Disabilities Act:** The Americans with Disabilities Act requires state and local governments to ensure that people with disabilities have a full and equal opportunity to vote. This law applies to all aspects of voting, including registering to vote, accessing polling places, and casting a ballot, both on Election Day and during early voting.

**Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act:** Under Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act, certain jurisdictions, as determined by the Census Bureau,<sup>1</sup> must provide all election information in the covered minority language that is available in English. The election process must be equally accessible in the minority language as it is in English so that all citizens will have an effective opportunity to register, learn the details of the elections, and cast a free and effective ballot.

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The Justice Department is committed to enforcing these vitally important obligations, to protecting the right to vote, and to securing free and fair elections for all Americans. Additional resources, including guidance documents, are available at [www.justice.gov/voting](http://www.justice.gov/voting).

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<sup>1</sup> Coverage is defined by a formula set out in the Voting Rights Act. The most recent determinations for Section 203 were made on December 8, 2021. For Section 203, covered language minorities are limited to American Indian, Asian American, Alaskan Native, and Spanish-heritage citizens. Under Section 4(e) of the Voting Rights Act, jurisdictions with Puerto Rican citizens may also have minority language obligations.

U. S. Department of Justice  
Civil Rights Division

[Justice.gov/voting](https://www.justice.gov/voting)