

# Should Congressman Smith Support The America Votes Act?

*(A Hypothetical Scenario)*

The 2016 elections revealed many threats to the American electoral system. In response, a bipartisan bill has been introduced in Congress to strengthen the safeguards for America's voters. The "America Votes Act" is composed of two provisions: (1) automatic voter registration; and (2) voter identification.

- (1) Under the automatic voter registration provision, each state automatically registers anyone who seeks a new or renewed driver's license or state ID unless a person affirmatively opts out. A person must affirm that he or she is eligible to vote but does not require disclosure of citizen status or of his or her reason for opting out. This provision is modeled on state law in Illinois and other states.
- (2) Under the voter identification provision, states would require anyone seeking to vote in person to identify himself or herself and to verify his or her qualifications as a citizen of the United States of America and a resident of the state by providing election officials with a valid government-issued photo identification. A person may seek an exception to the identification requirement on religious grounds. This provision is modeled on state law in Missouri and other states.

The bipartisan sponsors of the bill have argued that the United States needs to encourage fuller participation in our democracy and to protect the integrity of our elections. However, there is much distrust on both sides, and passions are high. Democrats are concerned about voter suppression under voter identification. Republicans are concerned about possibilities for voter fraud under automatic voter registration.

U.S. Representative Smith serves the XXth District of Missouri. Congress is recessed for the summer, and debate on the America Votes Act is scheduled for the fall. Smith has convened a special town hall where residents can share their views on the proposed legislation.