

Funding the Future

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I thought this press release from the Electoral Reform Society worth sharing:

The government's Elections Bill could disenfranchise over two million voters [1], according to the government's own figures, campaigners warn today.

The legislation – branded the ‘Elections Chaos Bill’ by the Electoral Reform Society – will see voters forced to show ID in General Elections, all elections in England and PCC votes in Scotland and Wales.

The bill has its second reading on Tuesday 7th September, suggesting it is a priority for the government as Britain continues to struggle with the pandemic.

Around 150,000 people have signed petitions against ID [2], opposing what they deem a ‘dangerous distraction’ at a cost of up to £20m per General Election [3]. The ERS are calling for as many people as possible to ***sign the petition against the plans this week.***

MPs across the spectrum - from the Conservatives' David Davis to Labour's Dawn Butler have expressed their opposition to this scheme, and voters are speaking up in large numbers.

The Elections Bill will also introduce unprecedented government control over the UK's independent elections watchdog, the Electoral Commission, in what a coalition of civil society groups are branding a ‘government power grab’ -

as well as imposing new campaigning restrictions on charities and non-profits [4].

Dr Jess Garland, Director of Policy and Research at the Electoral Reform Society, said:

More than two million voters lack recognisable photo ID, according to the government's own figures. This is the biggest change to voting in generations and it poses a huge risk to democratic equality.

"There is no evidence to justify this heavy-handed plan, when we know the real threats to political integrity are unregulated lobbying, dodgy donations and foreign interference.

"These proposals could disenfranchise voters on an industrial scale, at huge cost. While ministers have promised a 'free' ID, we are yet to see the details. There are huge risks asking stretched councils to both provide new IDs and become bouncers of the ballot box.

"The calls to scrap this dangerous ID policy are growing by the day. These petitions are a snapshot of the increasing anger from across society at this undemocratic and unnecessary plan. It is time to defend the right to vote.

"It's vital that all MPs and peers stand up for the right to vote and challenge this costly legislation head on.

"Ministers should be tackling the real issues in our politics: cleaning up Britain's broken political funding, bringing in the nine million people who are missing from the electoral roll altogether, and – crucially – reforming Westminster's one-party-takes-all voting system. Our electoral system is already unequal. The last thing we need is this attack on voters' rights."

ENDS

Notes to Editors

[1] Elections Bill: <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3020> **Background here:** <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/what-is-the-elections-bill-and-why-is-it-a-n-issue/>

Read the ERS' briefing on the planned imposition of voter ID: <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/latest-news-and-research/parliamentary-briefings/briefing-on-the-introduction-of-voter-id-westminster-hall-debate-13th-july/>

More than two million people at risk of being locked out: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/may/11/more-than-2m-voters-may-lack-photo-id-required-under-new-uk-bill>

The government has admitted this fact:

<https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/exclusive-ministers-just-made-an-astounding-admission-about-mandatory-voter-id/>

[2] 43,000 signatures on the ERS' voter ID petition:

<https://action.electoral-reform.org.uk/page/35710/petition/1?locale=en-GB>

102,000 on the government e-petition - rejected for a debate by authorities:

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/576024>

[3] Up to £20m per election for the government's strict photo ID requirements

<https://www.publicfinance.co.uk/news/2018/08/rolling-out-voter-id-could-cost-ps20m>

[4] <https://www.theelectionsbill.co.uk/>

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