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The fight to vote: voter identification laws and their impact on voter turnout during the 2014, 2016, and 2018 elections

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THE FIGHT TO VOTE: VOTER IDENTIFICATION LAWS AND THEIR IMPACT ON VOTER TURNOUT DURING THE 2014, 2016, AND 2018 ELECTIONS

by

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Dedication

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Abstract

Voter identification (ID) laws were introduced into the American electoral system during the 1970s, but have garnered more widespread attention in recent years and have expanded to over 30 states as of 2018. Critics have claimed that these laws are discriminatory toward several groups of voters. Given the supposed relationship between voter ID laws and voter turnout, a contemporary quantitative analysis of this connection should be examined. This analysis will improve existing election law and voting behavior literature by providing recent analyses and data using a quantitative approach with difference-in-difference regression tests. Using data provided by the Current Population Survey, individual Sectary of State office archives, and county-level election boards, this paper measures county-level voter turnout differences in the 2014, 2016, and 2018 election cycles, while controlling for voter ID law implementation and other state-level demographic variables. I concentrate my tests on states that have applied a voter ID law between 2014 and 2018. This analysis finds that states with voter ID laws impact voter turnout in negative and positive directions, which all suggests a larger strategy to ensure Republican victories in historically competitive states.

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Introduction

On June 21, 2012, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi commented on the rise of voter identification (ID) laws in the United States, stating that the rise "is no accident. It is no coincidence. It is a plan on the part of Republicans."[1] Congresswoman Barbara Lee of California concurred, and added that Republicans are "pushing laws designed to change election outcomes by reducing voting, repressing turnout…this is the exact opposite of where our country needs to go."[2] As indicated by these politicians, many obstacles have been created to limit voters from casting ballots in the increasingly polarized and political American election system. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), there are presently 35 states that have laws "requesting or requiring voters to show some form of identification" at polling places,[3] all of which were introduced in the 1970s and proliferated following the outcome of the highly contentious 2000 presidential election. Since this election, voter ID laws, along with redistricting procedures, criminal conviction laws, and early voting reforms have been implemented in these various states and have been justified by politicians as being a means of protecting the public from irregularities in the voting system.[4]

For instance, South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley signed a bill into law in 2011 requesting photo ID at the polls, justifying it thusly: "If you can show a picture to buy Sudafed, if you can show a picture to get on an airplane, you should be able to show a picture ID to (vote)."[5] Myrtle Beach Tea Party Chairman Joe Dugan agrees, "If we don't have integrity at the ballot box, we don't have it anywhere."[6] Understanding the political significance of voter ID laws is essential, given how politically salient the subject matter was in the recent 2018 midterm election. In fact, after Democrat Stacey Abrams was narrowly defeated in the 2018 gubernatorial election in Georgia by the state's Republican Secretary of State Brian Kemp, she founded Fair

Fight 2020, an organization which aims to promote voter turnout for the upcoming 2020 election. In her own words, Abrams claims that Georgia's voter ID laws are designed to "scare people out of voting" and that it plays a role in discriminating against minority voters.[7] Not only do Abrams' comments reflect the current political relevance of this topic, but they also emphasize the need to examine the intentions and consequences of these laws on millions of citizens across the country and why they are impacting voter turnout.

The kind of rhetoric and laws present in Georgia are also found in states across the country, which all ultimately leads to the main research question presented in this paper: What effect do voter ID laws have on voter turnout in the elections between 2014 and 2018? This paper will aim to answer this question by analyzing voter ID laws and their effect on voter turnout in the major elections of 2014, 2016, and 2018, specifically examining the changes at the county level in politically diverse states that hosted competitive races. Overall, I predict that the demographic groups controlled in my regression models will experience lower turnout rates because of a voter ID law's implementation during these election cycles.

Literature Review

I. ***The State of the American Election and The Voting Rights Act***

In order to understand the dynamics of the present-day American election system, all facets and components of the electoral system will be analyzed to comprehend the methods that attribute to voter turnout during these three elections, which will inform and motivate my hypothesis. To illustrate the origins of voter identification laws and policies, I will review recent legal and political decisions that resulted in the enactment of these new voting requirements. Although many of these laws originated in the 1970s, Mebane points to the 2000 presidential election between Governor George W. Bush and Vice President Al Gore as the beginning of the proliferation these laws, claiming that more than 50,000 votes were discarded from consideration in Florida because of processing errors in tabulating the results.[8] Contextually, the 2000 Florida election resulted in the difference of 537 votes out of the 6 million casted, thus making it one of the most decisive elections in modern American history.[9] In his paper, Mebane investigates Florida's voting behavior by estimating overvote proportions for Bush and Gore and how these ballots compared to those casted for a single candidate.[10] Mebane finds that 68% of the casted overvotes were in favor of Al Gore and if these votes were tabulated properly, then Al Gore would have been declared the winner of Florida's election by over 30,000 votes.[11] Following the 2000 election, President Bush passed the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002, aiming to reduce levels of overvotes and undervotes by replacing the faulty punch card system, which would conceivably reduce the possibility of a close election scenario happening again in Florida. While Mebane's strengths lie in this data collection of local precincts, I believe Mebane's study is limited in scope by only concentrating on Florida during the 2000 presidential election, which eliminates the analysis of other close states during that election year like New Hampshire and

Nevada. Even though examining Florida in the 2000 election is very helpful in realizing the

state's faulty election system, it does make it challenging to generalize the results of other

elections following 2000. My study aims to correct this shortcoming by expanding the scope and

analyzing the county-level data of multiple competitive states and elections, including Florida's

recent elections.

Hopps & Bowles provide context to Mebane's study by exploring the "gutting" of the

Voting Rights Act of 1964 (VRA), which resulted from the 2013 United States Supreme Court

decision *Shelby County v. Holder*. Originally, federal procedures were put in place to monitor the

voting registration and polling in certain states where preclearance was enacted, which improved

voting access as the federal government was more involved in the process. But in June of 2013,

Section 4(b) of the 1965 VRA, principally the preclearance provisions, was invalidated by the

Supreme Court in *Shelby County v.* Holder.[12] In a 5-4 decision, the Court decided that Congress'

decision in 2006 to reauthorize the preclearance requirement, without modifying the coverage

formula, was unconstitutional, meaning that the federal government no longer had to clear

districts when new laws were being created. The Court stated that the coverage formula's

application did not relate to the principle of equal sovereignty among the states. In the majority

opinion, Chief Justice John Roberts writes that the coverage formula was "based on forty-year

old facts having no logical relation to the present day,"[13] which almost ignores the fact that

preclearance led to increases in minority participation. This decision reverberates even today

with the increases in voter ID laws and the disenfranchisement of thousands of voters following

this decision, which Mebane and Hopps & Bowles emphasize in their papers. Hopps & Bowles

depart from Mebane's study by incorporating virtually no data quantitative design structure, but

instead concentrate primarily on the historical substance rather than quantitative scientific

inquiry. In fact, these authors warn about the consequences from these historic actions, including

that these changes are eroding civil rights gains.[14] Nevertheless, much of Hopps and Bowles'

work illuminates the importance of the *Shelby County v. Holder* decision by detailing its contents

and the kind of repercussions it has on the voting system today, which further enhances my

understanding of the history of these changes in the voting system.

II. *Redistricting*

The "gutting" of the VRA resulted in states and election administrations behaving with

political motives, specifically in regards to redistricting voting districts. I explore this connection

in greater detail by reviewing scholars like Abramowitz et al., who analyze the party votes of

safe and competitive House districts between 2000 and 2002 in order to assess the dangers that

incumbents face when running for reelection where redistricting is a factor.[15] The authors cite

Governor Schwarzenegger of California as an example of a public official claiming that

redistricting has made the electoral system biased for one party. Abramowitz et al. assert that

"the solution, the critics say, is to transfer responsibility for drawing state legislative and

congressional districts from the Legislature to independent, nonpartisan commissions such as the

panel of retired judges proposed by Schwarzenegger."[16] These authors conclude that redistricting

is the result of three factors: shifts in elected officials not sharing the values of their

constituencies, increasing political polarization, and incumbents' financial advantage. In other

words, the authors study how the elements of redistricting, political polarization, and financial

advantages aim to create political gains, but they do not seem to consider redistricting as an

influence on minority turnout or even the influence of electoral competition involved with this

process. The Center for Public Justice speaks to this point and reports that competitive elections

are a major component that drives voter turnout.17 My paper attempts to correct Abramowitz et al.'s drawbacks by analyzing how voter ID laws in competitive states particularly affect the turnout of racial and minority groups.

Similar to Abramowitz et al.'s article, Gopian & West tackle the redistricting efforts made in the 1982 House Elections by focusing on the particular strategy established in these races.18 To begin, Gopian & West criticize the methodology of existing literature addressing redistricting, and instead these authors use "individual districts as the unit of analysis and draws on previously unexamined data," which the authors claim will reveal substantial differences between aggregate and district-level approaches to testing data.19 In examining the systematic advantages and disadvantages in the redistricting of state legislatures in 1982, Gopian & West stress how strategic planning was critical for Republicans to obtain districts that were more favorable to them after the redistricting process.20 Citing other researchers and scholars, these authors continue exploring the strategic process behind redistricting by finding that in 1982, the "Republican party had gone to extraordinary lengths to recruit and fundable, attractive candidates…[to circumvent] Reagan's low popularity ratings and the economy's slow recovery,"21 implying that the strategy behind redistricting is reactionary and partisan. Gopian & West conclude that "redistricting effects depended on the strategic calculations of candidates and party leaders" and that there are numerous approaches strategists could take to win an election through redistricting.22 Gopian & West add to Abramowitz et al.'s study by providing several explanations of strategy being a design for redistricting. I find that these authors succeed in evaluating campaign strategy and while this paper does not focus heavily on the redistricting efforts made by political candidates and strategists, it does consider election administrations and their work to carry out new and existing laws. Also, Gopian & West's model of individual

district data motivates me to also collect present-day local data in competitive states as part of my methodology and research design.

III. *Gerrymandering*

Redistricting is similarly related to the concept of gerrymandering, in which districts are drawn with boundaries that intentionally favor one group of voters over others. Engstrom discusses this politically-charged topic by deconstructing gerrymandering to its central elements of electoral competition and party bias. In his analysis of racial gerrymandering and discrimination, Engstrom claims that because minorities largely identify as Democratic voters, courts have "allowed for the continued use of implicit racial gerrymandering. Nevertheless, the decisions of the more conservative Supreme Court of the 1990s have further reduced the scope for race to be a dominant factor in designing districts."[23] In fact, such racial gerrymandering was "a dominant factor" in Texas in 2017, according to Adam Liptak of *The New York Times*, who reports that "a three-judge panel of the Federal District Court in San Antonio had ruled that a congressional district including Corpus Christi denied Hispanic voters 'their opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice.'"[24] The gerrymandered drawing of Texas' second congressional district was contingent on race,[25] as Liptak adds clear evidence to Engstrom's point of race being a political motivator in the formation of these gerrymandered districts. In fact, I find that Engstrom's paper and Lipktak's article create a more nuanced perspective on this topic by adding components of racial motivations, which adds demographic elements to the work started by Gopian & West and Abramowitz et al. This topic is pivotal in the discussion of the racial and political dynamics behind redistricting because of how political motivations may impact minority turnout in this process. Gerrymandering, and redistricting more generally, provide context of individual state legislatures making certain decisions in response to turnout

differences. I can attribute a similar theme of political decision-making to my hypothesis by considering how voter ID laws influenced constituents in a variety of politically diverse states.

IV. *Limits in Early Voting and Ballot Access*

In addition to changes in the organization of districts, there have also have been notable developments in ballot access and early voting since the 2000 election. In "The Complicated Partisan Effects of State Election Laws," Burden et al. use county-level voting data from the 2004, 2008, and 2012 presidential elections to examine how voting laws affect the cost of participation in elections.[26] Specifically, Burden et al. pay attention to early voting returns and changes in registration laws by using cross-sectional regression and difference-in-difference models.[27] After showing the baseline results of their regression models, these authors "examine the effects of lengthening the early voting and [Same Day Voting] periods, then account for the density of early voting locations, and finally estimate more stringent difference-in-difference models."[28] Among their key results, these authors find that early voting has a negative effect on Democratic voters in the three elections between 2004 and 2012.[29] Burden et al. heavily assist my hypothesis and research design because of their skillful methodology. This paper aims to build off their existing work by exploring a relationship with voter turnout and other demographic control variables by adopting the author's regression model set up, while at the same time incorporating my own unique data.

Using data from the 1992 Current Population Survey (CPS), Oliver examines similar voter turnout components as the ones found in Burden et al. by hypothesizing that absentee eligibility reduces the costs of voting.[30] Oliver examines state party activity and cites the intriguing change in eligibility requirements for voting absentee, with over 7% of Americans having voted in the 1992 election via absentee ballots.[31] However, Oliver's findings suggest that

"liberalized state absentee requirements do not uniformly correlate with an increased likelihood of voting absentee; rather absentee voting is partially dependent upon the involvement of political mobilizers,"[32] thereby suggesting that other factors may be at work here. Oliver even affirms that "people in states with expanded eligibility and closed primaries are 4.2% more likely to vote absentee while their counterparts in states with universal eligibility are 3.2% more likely to mail in their ballots."[33] Ultimately, Oliver concludes that absentee voting rates are a result of other influences and that broader eligibility for absentee requirements are increased with party mobilization efforts, which challenges Burden et al.'s connection of new voting requirements directly influencing turnout. Although I narrow my focus to the subject of voter ID laws, I am now better informed about these new absentee voting requirements affecting the voting process.

Patterson & Caldeira also add to Oliver's assessment of absentee voting by correlating the absentee voting rate at the county-level to the consequences of the absentee voting system for the 1982 California gubernatorial elections.[34] And while they do not take party mobilization into account, they do examine the effect of California's legislature adopting a new law on absentee voting that "abandoned restrictions limiting eligibility to those too ill to go to the polling stations, or to those who would be traveling on election day." [35] As a result of this change, the Republican candidate George Deukmejian won the 1978 California gubernatorial race. Patterson & Calderia's article also contrasts with Oliver in timing, as these authors set their focus on legal changes resulting from state legislatures and their actions in the 1980s, compared to Oliver who observed changes in the 1990s. While these authors offer a worthwhile contribution to my understanding of the limitations of absentee voting access, I am determined to discover the impacts of voter ID laws on the electorate and, much like Patterson and Calderia's method, I intend to observe what kind of impact it had on voter turnout.

V. *Campaign Finance and Special Interests*

Much like *Shelby County v. Holder*, another U.S. Supreme Court decision has reshaped the American electoral system, namely *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (FEC)*. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, the *Citizens United* ruling stuck down a law preventing corporations and wealthy interests from contributing to federal politics and allowed outside sources to spend unlimited money on elections.36 The Brennan Center added that this ruling "dramatically expand[ed] the already outsized political influence of wealthy donors, corporations, and special interest groups."37 Congleton captures the Brennan Center's point by examining how special interest groups affect political outcomes through the specific lens of single-issue voting, referring to the kind of behavior exhibited in voters who base their votes on one particular issue.38 Congleton examines the several implications surrounding single-issue voting and special and economic interests and finds that coordinated interested groups become a major factor in influencing political outcomes. He concludes that special interest groups substantially influence electoral politics, even with fewer resources.39 In terms of Congleton's relevance to my paper, his article assists my understanding of the economic and special interests behind elections and campaigns. Congleton's article is also useful in pointing out how a change in the law, as deliberated by the Supreme Court, affects the voting behavior and participation of the electorate, which is a theme I investigate in this paper.

This discussion about financial influence in the political and electoral system is further unfolded in Briffault's explanation of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) of 2002. The BCRA intended to regulate the financial contributions of political campaigns by primarily limiting soft money, or money raised in large sums by political parties for the purpose of strengthening party activity.40 Briffault argues that the BCRA, while well intentioned, "fails to

address the fundamental problem with campaign finance system," such as the disclosure of campaign expenditures, limitations on contributions, and the public funding of candidates.41 Briffault mentions that other wealthy interests are at work to contribute unlimited sums of money to campaigns to circumvent this law and offers solutions on what reforms need to take place. Even though I found this article to be enlightening in the area of campaign finance, I thought this article skirted around the significance of the BCRA itself, which ultimately did not place a major amount of historical emphasis on how much money influences our political system through the use of campaign laws. In fact, according to the Federal Election Commission, about $1.7 billion were spent in the 2017/2018 election cycle alone.42 While campaign finance concerns do not directly apply to the goals of my paper, Briffault still provides helpful insight into the financial mechanisms influencing the voting system, which is expanded on by Congleton's explanation of the ever-controversial *Citizen's United* decision.

VI. *Role of Election Officials and Administrations*

Election officials and election administrations are critical organizations who are responsible for distributing resources and managing elections at the state, local, and county level. Hale et al. examined how public administrations and networks were able to conduct elections following the passage of the HAVA. Hale et al. focused on how these organizations' practices coincided with the "organizational performance" of the regions and districts they are overseeing and how this performance may be helping or hindering the community.43 In their article, Hale et al. consider these local and governmental efforts and assert that "today's intergovernmental environment of decentralized and diffuse responsibility, the high public attention since 2000, and the additional complications of new requirements under HAVA might suggest that the election administration is in need of wholesale overhaul."44 Hale et al.'s assessment continues about how

current election administrations have been influenced by major themes such as political incentives and financial difficulties, which influences their effectiveness. I believe that Hale et al.'s assessment of local election administrations offers substantial context for this paper by providing a more holistic overview of how election administrations hold a great deal of responsibility in executing elections. In fact, Hale et al.'s analysis strengthens my own understanding of these networks and provides helpful information that will guide my reasoning behind my models' results later in this study.

Montjoy supplements Hale et al.'s analysis with a focus on the complex network of administration actors and how they shape elections. Specifically, Montjoy assesses how the U.S. Election Assistance Commission and state CEOs use their new rule-making authority in the intergovernmental relations of election administrations.[45] As a result of these changes, 51% of election administrations have reported recruiting problems and administrations at the federal and state level have struggled to train and recruit poll workers, as well as secure spaces for voting stations.[46] Clearly, Monjoy shines a lot on election administrations lacking resources and staffing capability, which in turn enhances this subject compared to Hale et al. These authors provide useful information election administrations and their limits, which motivates me to consider how the actions of individual players and actors are carried out across county elections at the local level. In other words, I will engage with the literature on election administrations and how they relate to the application of voter ID laws in the observed states later in my analysis.

VII. *Voting Technology*

According to Alters & Kooreman, the technologies used to record and count ballots varies from county to county across the country in presidential, gubernatorial, and senatorial races.[47] Alters & Kooreman's paper takes a comparative approach by comparing American

voting machines to the technological processes of the Netherlands.[48] In their review of the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections the United States, Alters & Kooreman find that new innovations in touch screen voting have had a "negative effect on voter turnout, and a small but statistically significant positive effect on electoral support for George Bush."[49] Alvarez links this technology to the criteria of party identification, education, employment status, and type of technology to assess voting confidence, which reinforces Alters & Kooreman's findings in his article.[50] Alvarez finds significance in the relationship between technology and voter confidence, as "white voters who cast their ballot via a paper precinct technology being more likely to be confident than white voters who cast their ballot via punchcard, lever, or electronic precinct voting technologies."[51] Whether it is by punch card or touch screen, both Alvarez and Alters & Kooreman associate new voting technology to political participation difficulties. Given that these authors concentrate on data trends at the county level, it will be worth mentioning how technology played a role in voter turnout later in my analyses with a voter ID law in place.

VIII. *Race and Criminal Conviction Laws*

Larger changes in the voting system are shaped with racial bias, at least according to Bentele & O'Brien, who believe that reforms to state voting laws are "highly partisan, strategic, and racialized."[52] Bentele & O'Brien use an empirical approach to study Republican Party control and minority turnout in the 2000, 2004, and 2008 presidential elections and the legislation passed between 2006 and 2011 for any patterns that suggest a certain political leaning.[53] Ultimately, they find that between 2006 and 2011, "states that increased their share of Republican legislators, elected a Republican governor, or became more competitive in the electoral college in the presence of a Republican majority in the state house were more likely to pass restrictive voter legislation."[54] As a result of this pattern of restrictive voter requirements, 1

in 13 black men were ineligible to vote in 2010 and felon disenfranchisement laws directly impacted African Americans and their voting capacity at that time. Even though I believe that Bentele & O'Brien should have gone further in exploring the gender distinctions among minorities and their behavior, I do support Bentele & O'Brien's notion of the Republican Party passing suppressive voter laws at high rates, which I assume is connected to lower voter turnout.

Another clear example of race causing biased changes to voting can be found in Florida shortening the early voting period from 14 days to 8 days in 2012. Herron & Smith observed these changes made from the voting patterns among racial minorities and registered Democrats in 2008 to 2012 in this state.[55] According to the lists of registered voters from Florida's Department of State, African Americans consisted of about 20% of all early voters for all of Florida's early voting days, with Democrats making up a large part of the early voting electorate.[56] These authors claim that their early voting comparison reveals that "racial and ethnic minorities as well as Democrats and unaffiliated voters were far disproportionately less likely to vote early in 2012 than in 2008"[57] as a result of the early voting days being reduced in Florida. Herron & Smith's observations add to this catalogue of literature by providing more information on the effects of technology changes, which all enlightens me on the kinds of strategies that have been put in place to lower minority and Democratic turnout in competitive states. Unlike Bentele & O'Brien's evaluation of legislation passed during 2006 and 2011, these authors find that the mere change in early voting requirements disproportionately impacted minority and likely Democratic voters, which I find to be more fascinating and relevant to this paper. Therefore, examining these precedents provides a better foundation to learn how measures in states like Florida persist and even suppress minority turnout today.

In 2018, Floridians voted to reinstate the voting rights of over 1 million former felons.[58] While this is an achievement for voting rights and equality, Miles emphasizes how the existing phenomenon of felon disenfranchisement impacts voter turnout at the state-level, which lends insight as to how these laws operated before Florida's 2018 reform.[59] Miles' paper uses a "difference-in-difference-in-difference" model to compare state-level voter turnout rates on the categories of race, gender, and the presence of a law permanently disenfranchising ex-felons, using the U.S. Census as his chief data source.[60] Miles compares races and genders to each other, finding that compared to other groups "average turnout rates of African-American men in states where felony convictions disenfranchise them at the most disproportionate rates are no different than their average turnout rates in other states,"[61] signifying a lack of statistical significance. However, when comparing African Americans to white men, the author finds that "the difference in voter turnout between states with the most disproportionate disenfranchisement rate and other states is about 2.5 percentage points."[62] Based off of this evidence, the author concludes that the laws that cause voter disenfranchisement have no impact on voter turnout in states where the law exists.[63] I believe that Miles misses the mark by not effectively connecting the felon disenfranchisement law to election outcomes and if the outcome favors one political party over another. This could have been corrected if this author controlled for legislatures passing these laws and what political party was in control of government at that time. Furthermore, Bentele & O'Brien and Herron & Smith present more compelling evidence using county-level data of felon disenfranchisement that observes more direct localized impacts of these laws. Because this literature examines state laws' effect on certain voting groups, I plan to analyze states like Florida, Virginia, and Iowa, all of whom enacted strict criminal conviction laws in their recent

history, and endeavor to prove how voter ID laws impact election outcomes that favor one political party over minority voters.

IX. *Voter Identification Laws*

This paper concentrates primarily on how voter ID laws impact voter turnout in historically competitive states. In my preliminary prediction, I claim that voter ID laws have a negative effect on certain categories of voters, as the groups I study tend to vote for the Democratic party and are therefore targeted by these laws. As a result, if my theory is proven correct, Republican candidates win more elections over Democrats in competitive districts because of these voter ID laws. Baretto et al. emphasize this point in their article analyzing the impact voter ID laws have on the Indianan electorate in 2012. From the onset, Baretto et al. believe that voter ID laws already threaten Indiana voters, specifically low-income voters and the 18% of Indianan adults who do not have a high school diploma.[64] These authors then conduct a statewide telephone survey where about 1,000 interviews were collected among the pool of registered voters. As part of their methodology, Baretto et al. aimed to get a diverse sample of the population, so they specifically took oversamples of African-Americans, given that this minority representation in the Indianan electorate is small.[65] These authors used a chi-square test to evaluate the different rates of access to proper photo-ID among voters in Indiana, ultimately finding that voter ID laws significantly lower "the opportunity to vote for minority, low-income, less-educated, and the youngest and oldest residents of Indiana from the survey, who also tend to be correlated with Democratic partisanship."[66] In fact, Baretto et al. find that about 81% of eligible white voters had access to valid photo identification, compared to only 55% of eligible black voters, a difference of nearly 30%. In other words, Barretto et al. provide evidence to my prediction of minority, low-income, and registered Democrats being discriminated against by

voter ID laws. This paper will, however, differentiate from the findings and focus of Baretto et al.'s paper by focusing more on the local county level in regards to data collection and expanding the region of observation to multiple states across the country and not only Indiana. By expanding the sample, my analysis can lend more awareness to the inner workings of elections and in turn larger strategies of implementing these voter ID laws.

While it seems that voter ID laws produce limitations to voter turnout because of a lack of proper ID, Baretto et al. propose the following question: do voter ID laws deter voters from actually going to the polls at all? Erikson et al. attempts to answer this question by evaluating statistical arguments and finding a negative effect voter ID laws have on voter turnout.[67] Erikson and his colleagues used the CPS to measure the voter participation rate of over 64,000 registered voters of varying levels of education.[68] After conducting a difference-in-difference test from these registrants, these authors observe change in legislation, which has as "close to a zero 'effect' as possible for the college educated," given that they assume that the college educated are not as likely to be deterred from voting because of these laws. Comparably, registrants who do not have a college education do not experience changes that are statistically significant.[69] By focusing solely on college-educated registered voters from all over the country, Erikson et al. present findings that motivate me to investigate more into certain education categories. That being said, I would have wanted to see Erikson et al. adopt Baretto et al.'s approach of additionally examining the partisan implications surrounding college-educated voters and their behavior. The education approach Baretto et al. take influences my paper, as I aim to include a lower education attainment variable as one of the variables for my regression models and see how a control of voter ID laws impacts this group and this turnout.

Hanjal et al.'s study focuses on the most obstructive version of voter ID laws, which are labelled "strict," as they seek to develop new approaches in examining voter ID law data in their own paper.70 Hanjal et al. examine data on individual voter turnout from 2006 to 2014 using the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) and specifically observing trends and pattern shifts in party identification, race, and political ideology during this time.71 After running their logistic regression model, these authors find "a substantial increase in the gap between white and nonwhite turnout in strict voter ID states," with Latinos, for example, voting less because of voter ID laws by a factor of about 7.3 percentage points in general elections.72 Hanjal et al., however, do not definitively rest on a single conclusion, as they state that "it is extraordinarily difficult when focusing on one or two states in one particular year to be confident that other changes in the state were not responsible for changes in turnout"73. I will take Hanjal et al.'s note under serious consideration as it does raise the possibility of other spurious variables impacting voter turnout in close elections, which will be deliberated in this paper. I am also drawn to Hanjal et al.'s piece because it takes into account multiple variables when considering voter ID laws, which extends beyond Baretto et al. and Erikson et al.'s work. That being said, Hanjal et al., Baretto et al., and Erikson's articles help better piece together a more detailed understanding of how voter ID laws impact voter turnout and, moreover, how empirical analysis is needed to draw conclusions on multiple variables during a recent series of elections where this phenomenon is at work, which I aim to accomplish through my research.

X. *Types of Voter Identification Laws*

In this section, I will outline the main differences among the various types of voter ID laws by detailing the different requirements for each kind of law. Voter-identification laws are separated into two categories: "photo" and "non-photo," according to the NCSL:

Some states request or require voters to show an identification document that has a photo on it, such as a driver's license, state-issued identification card, military ID, tribal ID, and many other forms of ID. Other states accept non-photo identification such as a bank statement with name and address or other document that does not necessarily have a photo.[74]

Some states place more mandatory provisions and requirements on their voters than others, like Georgia, Indiana, Virginia, and Wisconsin, who all possess "strict photo-identification" laws. These laws, according to the NCSL, indicate that "voters without acceptable identification must vote on a provisional ballot and also take additional steps after Election Day for it to be counted."[75] While these state laws all have their individual differences, they all require voters to present the same kinds of government-issued IDs at the polls. In Virginia, for example, poll station managers may ask a Virginia citizen to present a U.S. passport, valid Virginia license, DMV-issued Veteran's ID card, student ID card, or any other identification card issued by a government agency in Virginia.[76] In terms of the penalties for not complying with the provisions of these strict photo-ID laws, one can be turned away from the polls entirely. In addition, the law states that "any voter who does not show one of the forms of identification specified in this subsection shall be offered a provisional ballot marked ID-ONLY that requires no follow-up action by the registrar or electoral board" and this must be submitted via mail ahead of the election.[77] Similarly, Wisconsin's strict voter-ID law offers the same penalty, with a specific clause that states that anyone who votes using a provisional ballot "may furnish statutory

ID to the election inspectors before the polls close or to the municipal clerk no later than 4pm on the Friday following Election Day."[78] In a similar way, Georgia's law does not consider a student-ID to be a valid form of identification for voting, but "an ID card can be issued at any county registrar's office or Department of Driver Services Office free of charge."[79] With these different provisions and deadlines established, I assume that voting in these states would be difficult to navigate than states without voter ID requirements.

Non-strict photo-ID laws differ from strict photo-ID laws because they allow "at least some voters without acceptable identification [the] option to cast a ballot that will be counted without further action on the part of the voter," which applies in states like Florida, North Carolina, and Rhode Island.[80] For instance, if voters do not present a valid form of identification when voting, they may be asked to sign an affidavit to confirm their identity or vote by a provisional ballot. In Florida, for instance, if an elector is asked to vote via provisional ballot, then the canvassing board would determine the ballot's validity by specifically considering whether "the elector is entitled to vote at the precinct where the ballot was cast and that the elector had not already cast a ballot in the election."[81] This state's process is usually conducted by comparing the signature on the provisional ballot envelope with the signature in the voter registration records.[82] Other states like North Carolina designate their review policies to their county board of elections for electors who do not possess proper identification and instead send in a series of forms to the state.[83] Because these forms are managed by government agencies, it is reasonable to assume that they may not approve of every elector by the time of the election, which undermines their ability to vote. Not to mention that the very existence of these photo-ID laws may deter voters who are unable to comply with their state's local laws and are therefore unable to turn out to the polls.

XI. *Conclusion*

This paper has reviewed literature surrounding the topic of voting and the dynamics of the election system that contribute to the suppression of voter turnout in states across the U.S. These dynamics were best demonstrated by the politically biased organization of voting districts caused by the redistricting and gerrymandering of these areas, as well as the limits in the early voting process and the changes in campaign finance laws that favor special interests. I also explored the role of election administrations and their management of their region's elections, the introduction of new voting technologies, how race and criminal status play a factor in who votes. Although the literature suggests a wide variety of subject areas that are responsible for low voter turnout among certain groups, this paper has remained consistent and determined in its focus of voter-ID laws being a major factor in the lowering of voter turnout in certain politically competitive states. While much of the literature agrees that Republican-controlled states craft voter ID laws to suppress the turnout of minorities and other Democratically-affiliated groups, this paper intends to build off that operating suggestion by focusing on how voter ID laws between 2014 and 2018 impacted the turnout of voters, which uniquely take place during an increasingly polarized political climate that coincided with the transition between two presidents. By examining these voter ID laws, I intend to provide evidence of how these laws are discriminatory by design and how their existence lowers the turnout of a specified groups of voters.

Data & Methodology

In my research, I analyze the impact voter ID laws had on voter turnout in the 2014, 2016, and 2018 elections. I concentrate on 19 states, specifically 7 states that implemented a voter ID law within the 2014 - 2018 timeframe of this study (Iowa, Kansas, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin), 6 states whose voter ID laws were implemented before 2014 (Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, North Carolina, and Ohio), and, as a means of comparison, 6 states that have not implemented a voter ID law whatsoever (Maine, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, Oregon, and Pennsylvania). These 19 states were categorized in this way to ensure a variety of comparisons and differences in the regression models. Of these 19 states, the ten most populous counties were selected to guarantee a high level of representation of the people residing in the state, all of which totaled to 185 counties observed and tested. I made this choice for my study due to timing constraints because each state differs in terms of their total population and number of counties. Furthermore, I encountered accessibility issues in collecting county-level turnout data, which led me to make this time-efficient decision for my research design. In doing this, these ten most populated counties will be representative of the state's population totals.

The selection process for choosing these states included looking at the history of their implementation of voter ID and election laws, whether they had requirements for voter ID laws, and if these laws were established prior to one of the elections in the allotted timeframe. Another factor I considered was the states' background of hosting competitive elections; a state was considered for the regression models if the state had a history of competition between Democrats and Republicans because voter turnout is expected to be high in those situations.[1] The prospect of high voter turnout in these 19 states is important because it creates the likelihood of a diverse

and representative electorate from a large population sample.2 For this reason, I avoid choosing

states like New York, California, and Texas, who all have high concentrations of liberal-leaning

voters in urban areas. The reason for this decision stemmed from the idea that metropolitan and

urban areas would outperform rural communities in liberal voter turnout,3 which I worried would

create an unrepresentative and skewed sample. On the other hand, I did incorporate states like

Florida, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania in this study, which all contain metropolitan centers with

large liberal voting bases. However, these states produced politically competitive races in recent

elections, regardless of their urban center's voting presence. Therefore, choosing the ten most

populous counties in each state should produce a proportional and fair representation of the state

as a whole.

Moreover, two sources were used for the specific data in my research. The first, in terms

of demographic information, was pulled from the Current Population Survey (CPS), affiliated

with the United States Census Bureau. The CPS provided raw state-level demographic statistics,

specifically on the total number of people in demographic categories based on the state they

resided in. These broad categories include gender, race, age, education-level attainment,

unemployment status, and median household income. These categories and statistics were

generated through CPS' "Data Table Generator," which allowed me to access demographic

statistics based on each state that was being examined, rather than the country as a whole.

Although this is collected state-level demographic information, it would have been more ideal to

collect county-level demographic information for this paper, which would have matched with the

county-level voter turnout data. However, most of the state-level data sources do not label their

voters by age, race, or gender, and therefore, this data is only available at the state-level.

Secondly, I pulled total county-level turnout and registered voter information from individual

Secretary of State's offices, state election commissions, or county election commissions for each of the states being inspected in this paper. These sources would gauge local county-level activity and turnout data. All of these local sources had to be evaluated because each state varies in data availability, with some turnout data being difficult to locate among some of these sources in the archives.

Much of the modeling for this study is based off of Burden et al.'s 2017 study on partisanship and state election laws.4 I followed Burden et al.'s quantitative approach and conducted simple multivariate linear regression difference-in-difference tests using an ordinary least squares (OLS) model. While I do maintain the structure of Burden's quantitative research design, I do add additional variables controlling for high school education attainment and unemployment status, and not controlling for early voting or felons. I also shift my paper away from Burden et.al's focus on the early voting process and solely center my study on voter ID laws. First, I create three "Turnout" variables that trace the difference between two elections. These variables were created by simply subtracting two of these variables from each other, such as the difference in voter turnout between the 2014 election from the 2016 election. The same subtraction process was applied to the total county-level registered voters variable. These raw county-level values were then converted into percentages which corresponds to Burden et al.'s process. These percentages were made by simply dividing total county-level voter turnout by the total number of county-levl registered voters and then multiplying the value by 100 to obtain the percentage value. Moreover, I applied a similar mathematical approach to the state-level demographic control variables by using the number of people within a certain class and dividing them by the total number of people in the state and multiple the result by 100.

As for the primary independent variable of "Voter ID Law," it highlights whether or not a voter ID law was implemented in the state between any of the three election cycles and was branded with a "YES" or "NO" with information provided by the NCSL. If a state was labeled with a "YES," the state enacted a voter ID laws during the allotted election cycle timeframe and if a state was labeled with a "NO," then the state either did not have a voter ID law at all or applied the law before the 2014. In situations where a state's voter ID law was removed, as was the case with North Carolina's voter ID law, then the state would be labelled "NO," as the law was no longer valid by the time of any of the elections being studied.[5] From here, the independent variable was converted into a dummy variable, coded 0 for states that did not have a voter ID law enforced between two election cycles, and coded 1 for states that had a voter ID law during these elections.

After these variables were created, I then concentrated on certain control variables of the categories of people that could be at the highest risk of voter disenfranchisement as a result of a voter ID law being implemented using the CPS data. These variables included "Hispanic," "Black," "Female," "High School Diploma," "Unemployed," and "Low Median Household Income" for 2016 and 2018. Demographic statistics from 2014 were not considered for these regressions, as this approach would contrast Burden et al.'s in measuring differences in their regression tests. In regards to the Hispanic and Black categories, I decided to test these particular control variables because they were used in Burden et al.'s regressions and were based off presumptions that minorities are at a high risk of not voting because of a voter ID law. For instance, a 2018 *Atlantic* article reported on the barriers that limit minority access to the polls, finding that Wisconsin enacted "racially biased election laws."[6] Another article, this time from the *Washington Post*, claims that minorities and people of color are at a greater chance of not

meeting the requirements to secure a voter ID card, with one Washington federal court adding

that "the burden of obtaining a state voter-ID certificate would weigh disproportionately on

minorities."[7] Based off of the literature on this subject and from these two articles, I presume that

Hispanics and African Americans are at a greater risk of being negatively impacted by voter ID

laws. Voting trends in recent elections suggest that minorities vote for Democratic candidates at

higher rates between 2014 and 2018 than Republican candidates. The same could be said for

female voters, who have voted in higher frequencies and voted for the Democratic candidate

more compared to male voters during these elections[8].

Another category of people that I examined was adults between the ages of 65 and 74,

which is an age class I define as "elderly" and that I adopted from Burden et al's study. Because

of my interest in understanding the elderly's voting response in states with a voter ID law, I

differentiate my model from Burden et al.'s on the basis of age by solely focusing on elderly

adults and excluding 18-24-year-old adults, or "College Students and Graduates." While one

could argue that college graduate turnout is significant because of its rise in turnout over the past

few election cycles, they have been historically outperformed by adult elders in the 2014 and

2018 midterm elections. Adding to this point, many voter ID laws include a provision that allows

college-aged students to use their college-issued and government identification cards to vote in

states with these laws. Meanwhile, adults between the ages of 65 and 74 are less likely to possess

a government-issued ID card and are consequently at a greater chance of being directly impacted

by a voter ID law. I also include a variable that represents the number of adults in these states

who have only obtained a high school diploma and nothing higher. Moreover, this data, like all

of the descriptive statistics listed in this section, comes from the CPS' database, which arranges

education attainment into four categories, "No Education," "High School Diploma," "Some

College," and "Bachelors or Higher." For the purpose of this study, I only look to high school education and compare it to the other forms of education level attainment while controlling for voter ID laws.

Next, I argue the connection between the unemployed and voting turnout can also be affected by voter ID laws due to their lack of resources as well and I engage with the literature to further understand the context of this possible connection. In 2012, Burden & Wichowsky discussed economic voting behavior, and more specifically the voting behavior of the unemployed. To test the relationship between the unemployed and voting behavior, these authors conduct a difference-in-difference test on Democratic and Republican voters and the unemployment rate over time at the state-level. Their findings suggest that the "turnout gap between the employed and unemployed shrinks as state unemployment increases. In sum, it appears that a sour economic performance, at least in terms of unemployment statistics, invigorates rather than suppresses electoral participation."[9] While these results suggest that poor economic conditions may increase voter turnout, these authors do not incorporate a control variable of a voter ID law, which I intend to include in my models. As a result, I intend to test the relationship between voter ID laws and their impact on the unemployed and I theorize that if voter ID laws were established during the timeframe of the three elections, then it will have a disproportionate and negative impact on the turnout of unemployed voters.

Lastly, I add the variable of median household income because I believe it adds to my existing prediction of adults of a lower socioeconomic status, especially those making between $25,000 - $69,999 a year, being negatively impacted by voter ID laws because of their lack of resources. The lower bracket of the range for this economic class was taken from the U.S. Department of Education, which classifies a family in poverty as making about $25,500 a year,

as well as the US Census10. This variable's upper bracket of $69,999 originated from a Pew

Research Study that classified 52% of American adults that they studied at around $70,000 as

part of low median household income.11 I also label and classify the other median household

income variables with numerical upper and lower brackets. Specifically, those who made

between "$25,000 - $69,000" were classified as "Low Median Household Income," those who

made between "$70,000 - $99,999" were considered "Middle Median Household Income," and

those who earned "$100,000+" were classified as "High Median Household Income." Given

these economic considerations, I intend to test this variable to understand voter turnout

differences among those of a lower median household income compared to those of a higher

median household income status. For the variables linked to economic disadvantage, I decided to

concentrate these three variables of a lower socioeconomic status: "High School Diploma," the

"Unemployed," and "Low Median Household Income." I assume that members of a lower

socioeconomic class and education level were present in the elections studied in my research. I

predict that these three variables are all linked to economic adversity and that a voter ID law will

negatively impact their turnout because of their limited resources as a result their low

socioeconomic status.12 These economically disadvantaged voters could be less likely to become

informed on the law's requirements, which results in members of these groups not obtaining the

necessary government-approved IDs to legally vote in their state.

Before I incorporate all of these control variables in my regression models, I first include

a series of descriptive statistics that highlight the population totals of these variables by state. I

include figures displaying the total voter turnout rate by state for each of the three elections

because I believe that in order to fully grasp turnout differences over the span of three election

cycles, it is important to understand the fluctuations in total voter turnout and other demographic

changes for the purpose of visual representation, especially the voting behavior of racial

minorities, women, the elderly, and those with a lower socioeconomic status. These descriptive

statistics also highlight a series of variability measures which were calculated using the values in

the dataset. Likewise, given that there were turnout percentage differences during this timeframe,

a scaling function was applied to all of these variables to standardize them properly, which

should also remove any concern of multicollinearity when these variables are used.

In my first model, I test the turnout difference between the 2016 election and the 2014

election while controlling for voter ID laws and the demographic variables. These two elections

did see a massive turnout disparity, with the 2016 presidential election seeing a voter turnout rate

of about 58%.[13] At the same time, the race consisted of two polarizing candidates of both parties

and Barack Obama was President at the time of both elections. This is relevant because during

both elections, President Obama became the target of many Republicans in their own bid to seek

higher office. Thus, these possible spurious factors interfering with the regression observation

will be assessed for their conceivable impact on my research after the tests are conducted. A

similar point can be assumed in the second model of comparing the difference of the 2016

presidential election to the 2018 midterms, which also demonstrates unique differences in voter

turnout, political polarization, and voter mobilization efforts. However, the third model may

correct these possible underlying issues by comparing the 2014 and 2018 midterms, which both

are in the same non-presidential election years. These midterms should also be significant

because of the elections taking place under the administrations of two presidents from two

different political parties, President Obama and President Trump. In sum, I expect to find

statistically significant and negative results for my turnout dependent variable while controlling

for demographic variables and voter ID laws.

Results

Figure 1 presents a map of the United States and reports the 19 states being observed in

this study and organizes them into 3 categories: "States without a Voter ID Law," "States with a

Voter ID Law (before 2014)," "States with a Voter ID Law (between 2014 – 2018)." A color-

coded scheme was used to differentiate these three categories, as indicated by Figure 1's legend.

According to this figure, the chosen states for this study, especially the ones with a voter ID law,

are in fact in various regions of the country, from New England to the Midwest to the Southwest.

Most of the states without a voter ID law have a mix of Democratic and Republican voters and

are diversified with both urban and rural population centers. All of the states with a voter ID law

have seen competitive races between the two major parties or have had Republicans holding a

significant number of state and federal level positions in government between 2014 and 2018.

Just on population statistics alone, 38.03% of all Americans are represented in these 19 states.

Figure 1. States and Voter ID Laws
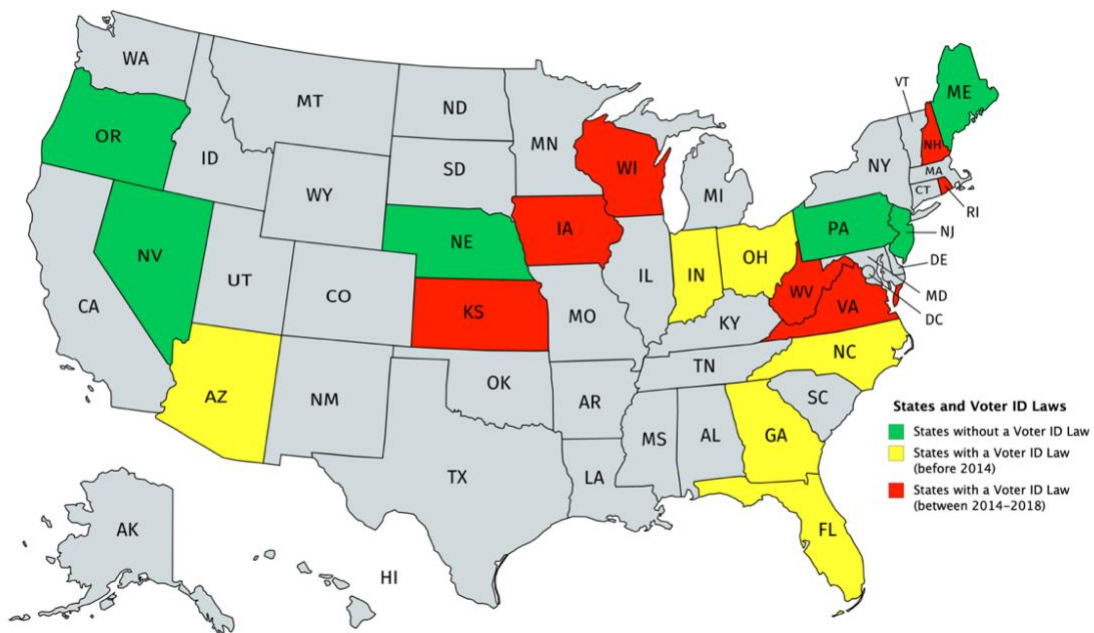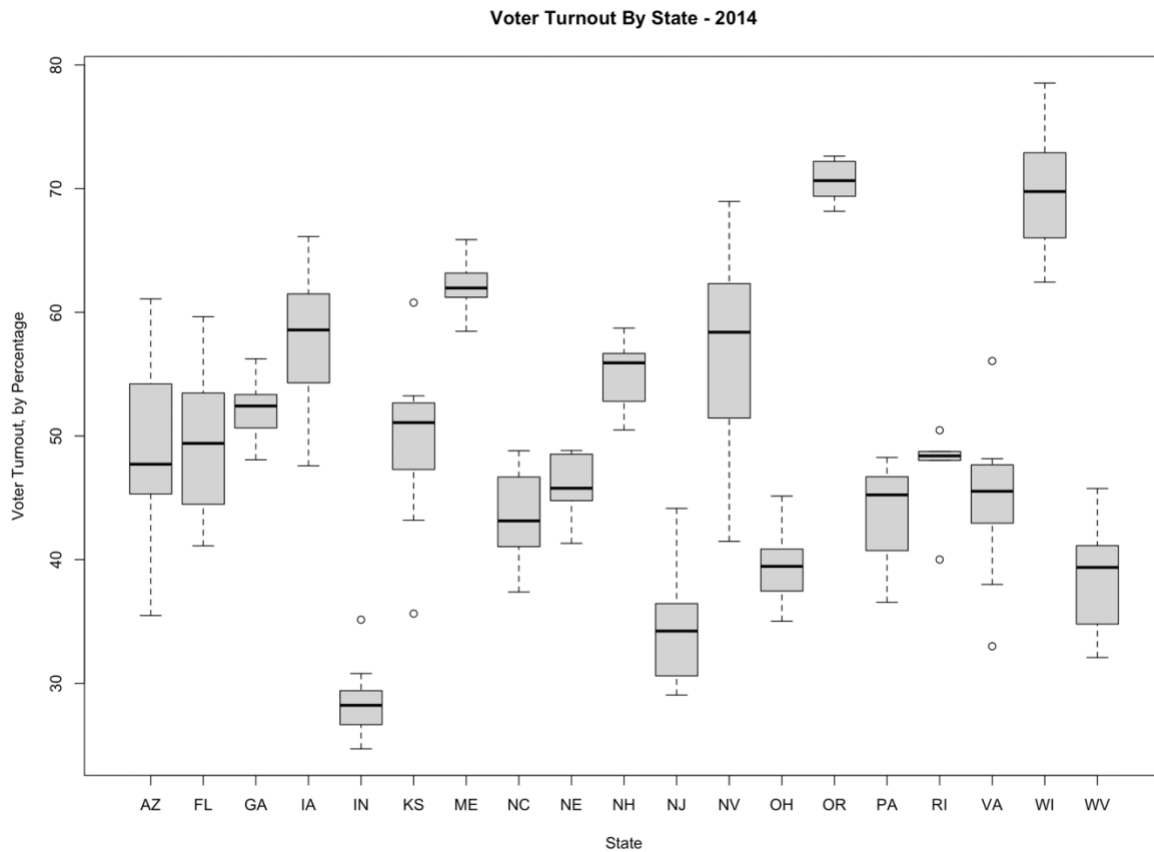

Source. National Conference of State Legislatures[1]

Figure 2. Voter Turnout By State, 2014

Voter Turnout By State - 2014

Figure 2 is represented by a box plot and reports the turnout rates by state in 2014. In terms of the states with the lowest turnout in this election, it appears that Indiana has the lowest turnout rate at less than 30%. Judging by the position of New Jersey's median, it appears to be the second to last state in terms of voter turnout, at around 35% and it also appears to be positively skewed toward the lower values. On the other side, both Oregon and Wisconsin report relatively high levels of turnout near 70%. In terms for the 19 states as a whole, the mean average turnout for Figure 2 is 49.39%. Some states like Nevada and Arizona exhibit extended upper and lower hinges in their box, which represents the connection of the minimum and maximum values and fall within 1.5 times the quartile range. It should not come as a surprise

that Figure 2 has a high variability due to its data points being so spread out across the graph,

with a variance of 139.24 with a standard deviation of 11.8 that departs from the mean.

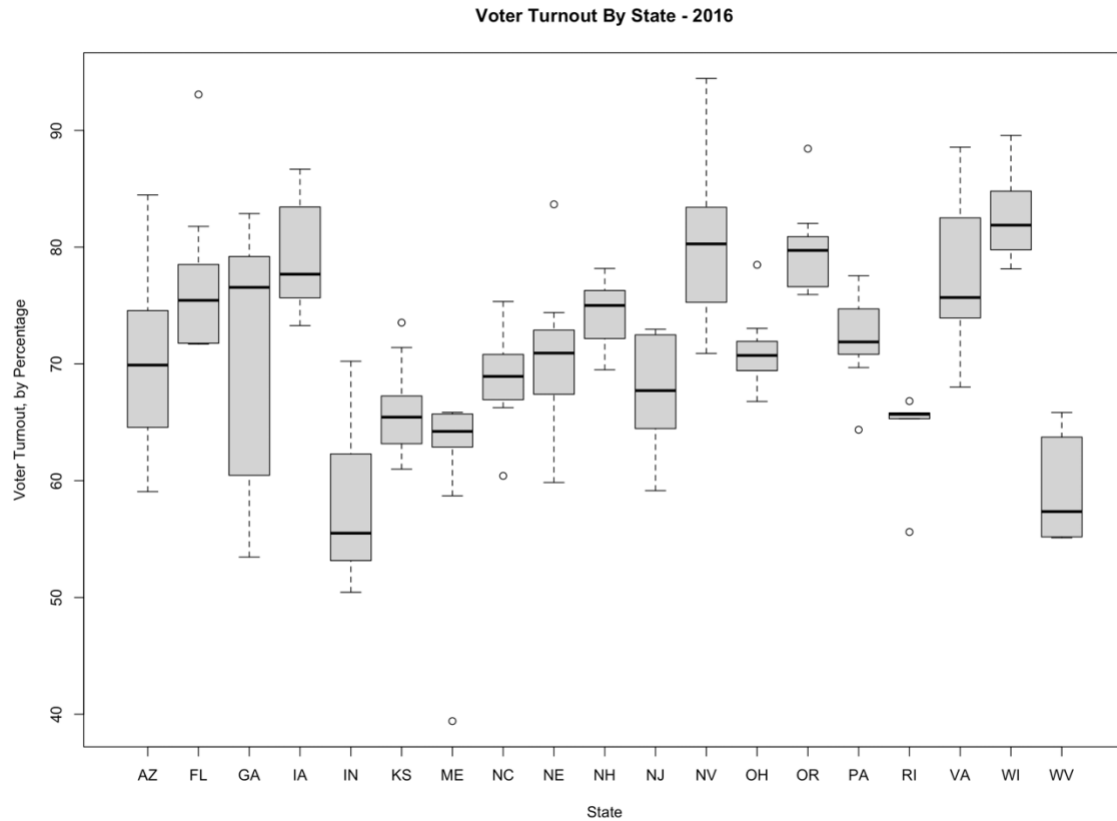**Figure 3.** Voter Turnout By State, 2016

Figure 3 reports a similar box plot that accounts for the voter turnout percentages by state

in 2016. The median of this figure is 71.7 with a mean of 71.34, which shows how similar the

voting patterns were across these states. Strikingly, Georgia has a median at 78%, but also has

the largest lower quartile that almost extends beyond 60%, which indicates the voter turnout

below which 25% of these cases fall. On the other hand, Virginia appears to have a noticeably

high upper quartile that exceeds an 80% turnout rate, showing that 75% of the cases fall within

that range. These features make both Virginia and Georgia have intriguing and wide interquartile

ranges. Another interesting data point reported in Figure 3 is the lowest outlier in the box plot for

Maine, which represents one of the state's counties with a noticeably low turnout around 40%. This outlier reflects the state's overall low population totals and large rural areas. Meanwhile, Florida appears to have a higher outlier value above 90%. Both of these points show how they are several times above the upper quartile of their respective boxes. Nevada's upper hinge extends to over 90% and also appears to be skewed positively. Overall, Nevada, Iowa, Virginia and Wisconsin all have the highest turnout rates, while Indiana and West Virginia have the lowest rates. Compared to Figure 2, this distribution's variance is lower at 81.86, but still indicates the spread-out variability with a 9.05 standard deviation for the mean.

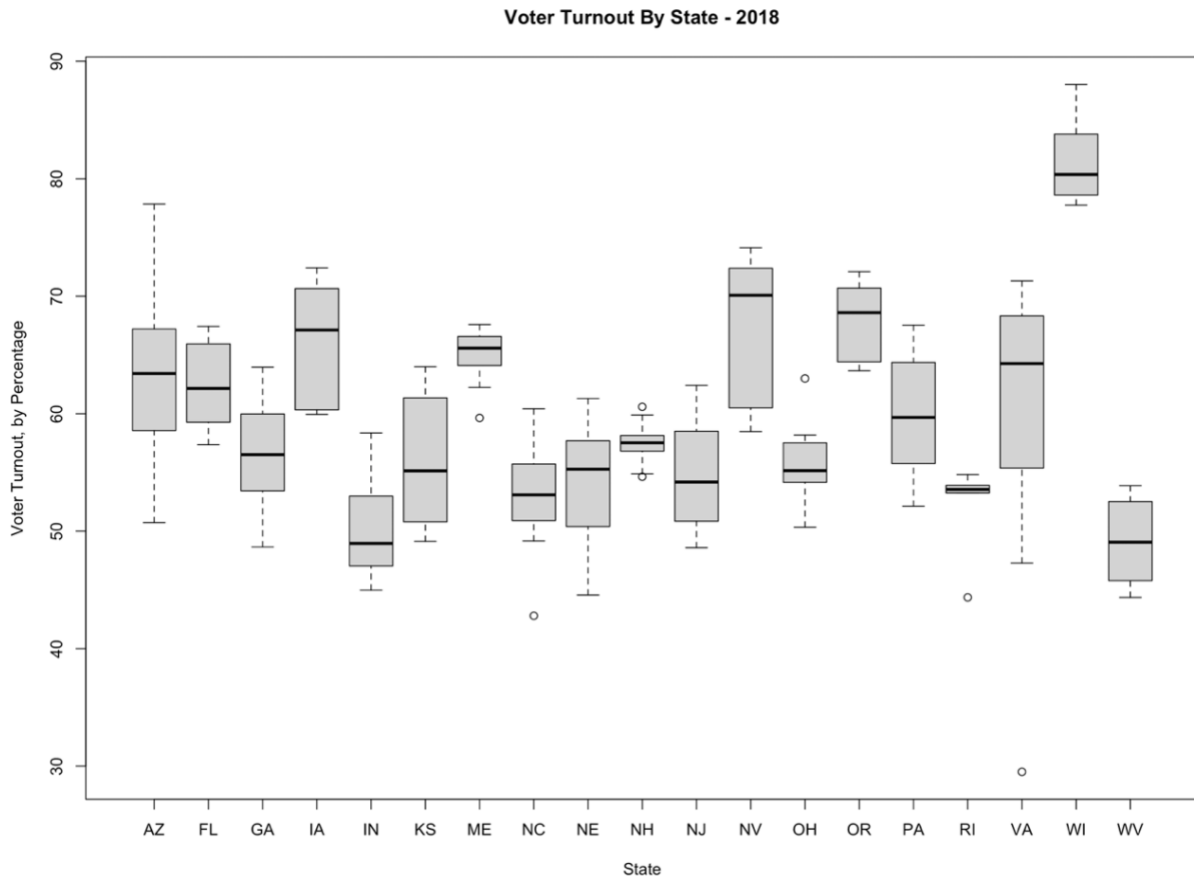**Figure 4.** Voter Turnout By State, 2018

Figure 4 reports turnout rates for the 2018 midterm election, as represented by a box plot like in Figures 2 and 3. Wisconsin appears to have a comparably high turnout rate than the other states with a median point at around 80%. Meanwhile, West Virginia and Indiana have relatively similar medians just below 50%. Although, Indiana's upper quartile reaches above 50%, showing again the value below which 75% of the cases fall, in which median is closer to the lower quartile. Some outliers are present in this figure, with Virginia displaying a low turnout outlier for one of its counties at 30%. Regarding the box plot graph as a whole, the y-axis dependent variable of voter turnout in the 2018 election has a mean value of 59.73 and a median of 58.79, which both show again how relatively similar these two values are to each other. Figure 3 reports a slightly higher variance than Figure 2 at 84.11, but it still is lower compared to 2014. Nevertheless, this high variability is matched with a standard deviation from the mean of 9.17.
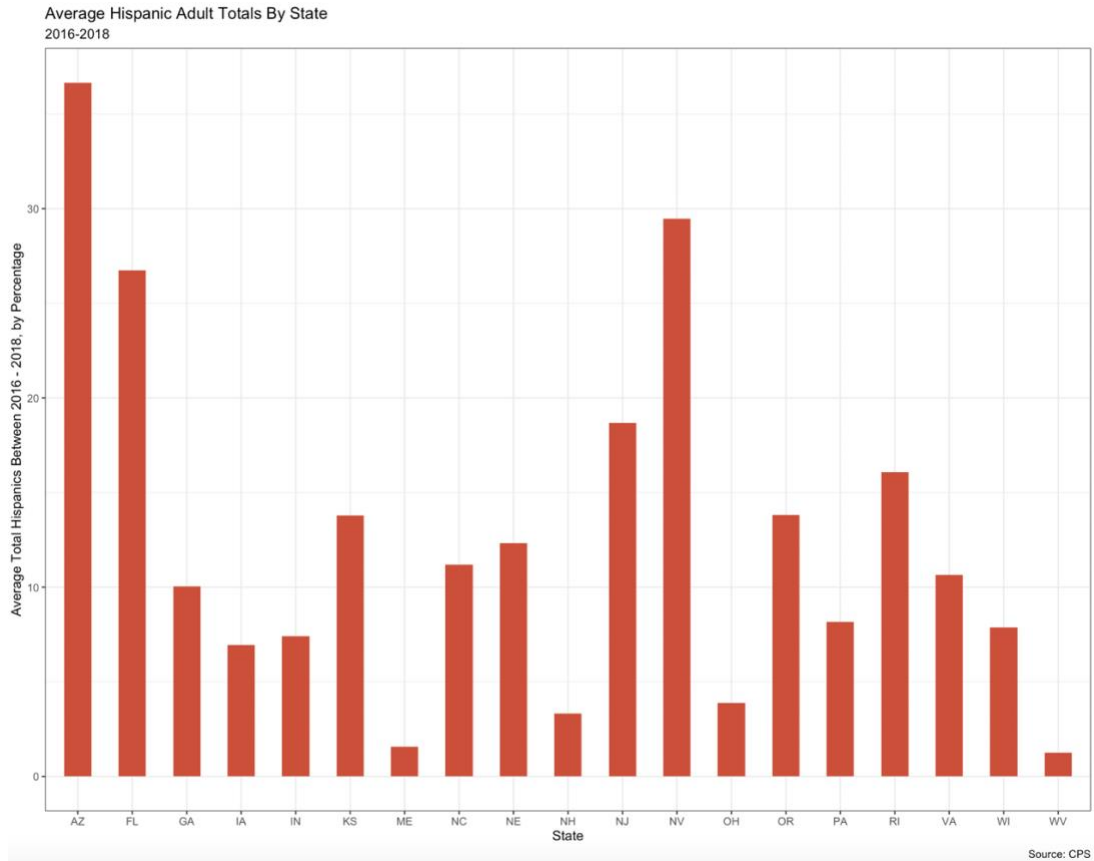
Figure 5. Average Hispanic Adult Totals By State, 2016-2018

Average Hispanic Adult Totals By State
2016-2018

Source: CPS

Figure 5 and Figure 6 report percentage population totals by state during the 2016 and 2018 elections for Hispanic and African Americans respectively. The data of Hispanic turnout in Figure 5 reports a bar chart distribution of the average number of Hispanic adults in the 19 observed states between 2016 and 2018. The bars represented in this figure, as well as the following figures of the descriptive demographic statistics, align with the average percentage of Hispanic population totals between these two election years. Among these 19 states, three states appear to have a predominant share of the nation's Hispanic adults: Arizona (37%), Nevada (28%), and Florida (27%). These three states have historically had large concentrations of Hispanic adults in their overall population, as these three states are also in the top 10 states in the country with the highest percentage of Hispanic adults.[2] Comparably, Maine, New Hampshire,

and West Virginia have small numbers of Hispanics in their overall population, both with below

5% Hispanic makeup and a disproportionate number of adults of other races at over 90%. The

pattern implies that a high percentage of Hispanic adults reside in Western states and states with

large urban concentrations. The y-axis variable of the average number of Hispanic adults

produced a very high variance of 88.84, indicating an unsurprisingly heterogeneous collection of

data points for Hispanic adults. In terms of the measure of variability for this group, the variable

holds a standard deviation (σ) of 9.43, which is a helpful point in understanding the placement of

one point in the whole distribution and how it departs from the mean of 12.53. While this graph

does not appear to have a particular shape, the majority of percentages in the states are lower and

do appear to be positively skewed.

Figure 6. Average African American Adults Totals By State, 2016-2018
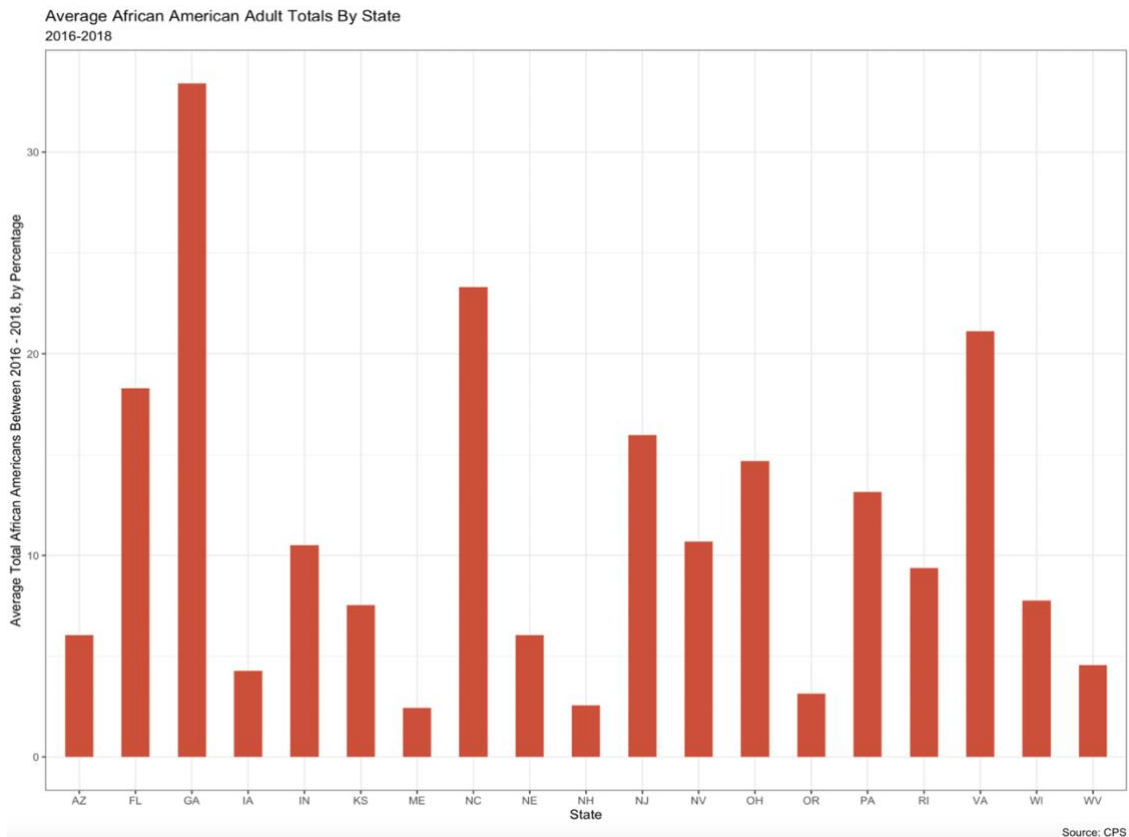
Similar to Figure 5, Figure 6 reports a bar chart distribution of the average percentage of

African American adults residing in the 19 observed states within the same timeframe of 2016

and 2018. One of the most interesting findings comes from the state of Georgia, which has the

highest percentage of African Americans, reaching about a 33% total percentage rate during

these elections. North Carolina (23%), Virginia (21%), and Florida (18%) follow closely after

Georgia with relatively high average percentages of African American adults. The high

percentages of these four Southern states are not surprising, as they also reflect existing African

American population statistics during this time period, according to the Office of Minority

Health at the US Department of Health and Human Services.3 Conversely, Maine, New

Hampshire, and Oregon reveal some of the lowest average percentages of African Americans, all

ranging from about 2 to 3% of their overall population makeup. Interestingly, these states, as

well as states like Iowa and West Virginia, all contain overall low numbers of minority

populations. This pattern also points to the fact that while all five of these states are not

concentrated in one particular region of the country, they do encompass large swaths of rural

land with overall low population counts. Correspondingly, states that house large concentrations

of African Americans are more urbanized and densely populated with higher population totals.

Furthermore, the variance of the y-axis variable of average African American totals is lower

compared to the variance of the Figure 5 dependent variable, but still remains relatively high at

66.08. This high variance not only indicates a mixed collection of data, but it also shows how the

data points in Figure 6 are more spread out from the mean of 11.35. Figure 6's distribution also

reports a standard deviation (σ) of 8.13, also highlighting the average deviations from the mean

in a distribution whose values also skew in a positive direction. With variability differences

between these two racial demographic graphs, it's clear that Figure 6 has a high degree of

variability because of its higher variance. Nevertheless, both Figure 5 and Figure 6 are useful in understanding the racial demographic makeup of the states being studied in this paper.

Figure 7. Average Female Adult Totals By State, 2016-2018
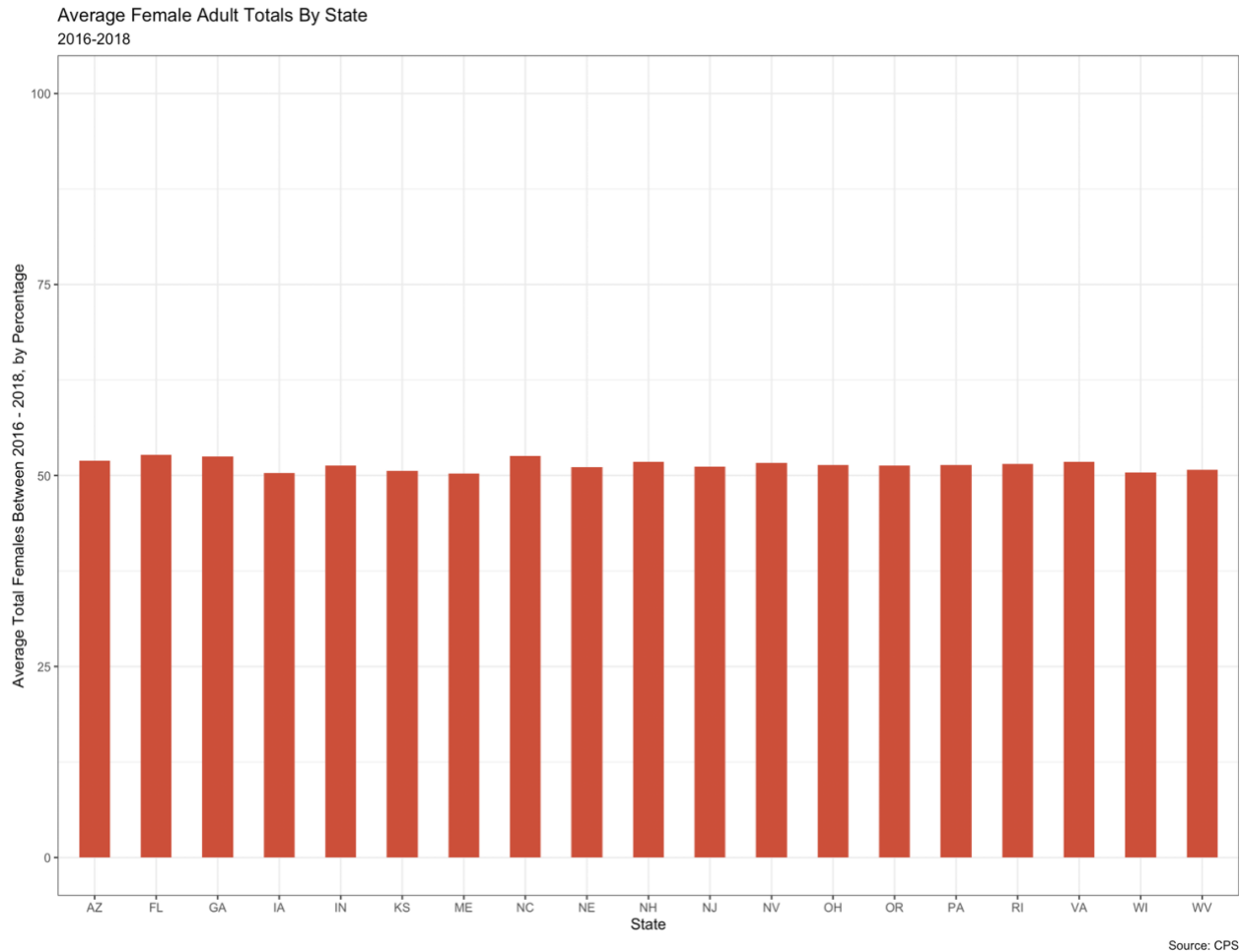
Figure 7 reports the total average distribution of adult women residing in the observed states between 2016 and 2018. In terms of the layout of this uniform graph, the y-axis limits were expanded in order to clearly point out how closely all of these values reach the 50% mark of the population. Most of these states have relatively similar shares of the female population, with Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina being slightly more abundant at around 52%. By contrast, Iowa, Maine, and Wisconsin have a slightly lower percentage of women compared to the Southern states, all at around 50%. The median of this distribution is 51.35 and mean of this

distribution is 51.38, showing how close they are to each other and only off by 0.03. It is worth reiterating that these differences in percentages are rather slim because this variable encompasses more of a state's total population and is not restricted on the basis of race or any other demographic other than sex. Therefore, the very low variance of 0.51 of this nearly homogenous distribution coincides with the data points presented in this bar chart falling close to the mean and to each other. Likewise, the standard deviation (σ) is 0.72, which with the variance helps explain how these data points do not indicate strong variability and do not depart far from the figure's mean. In understanding Figures 5, 6, and 7, it would appear that many of these groups reside in the South, which perhaps further emphasizes how many of these citizens reside in states with more densely populated and urban centers.

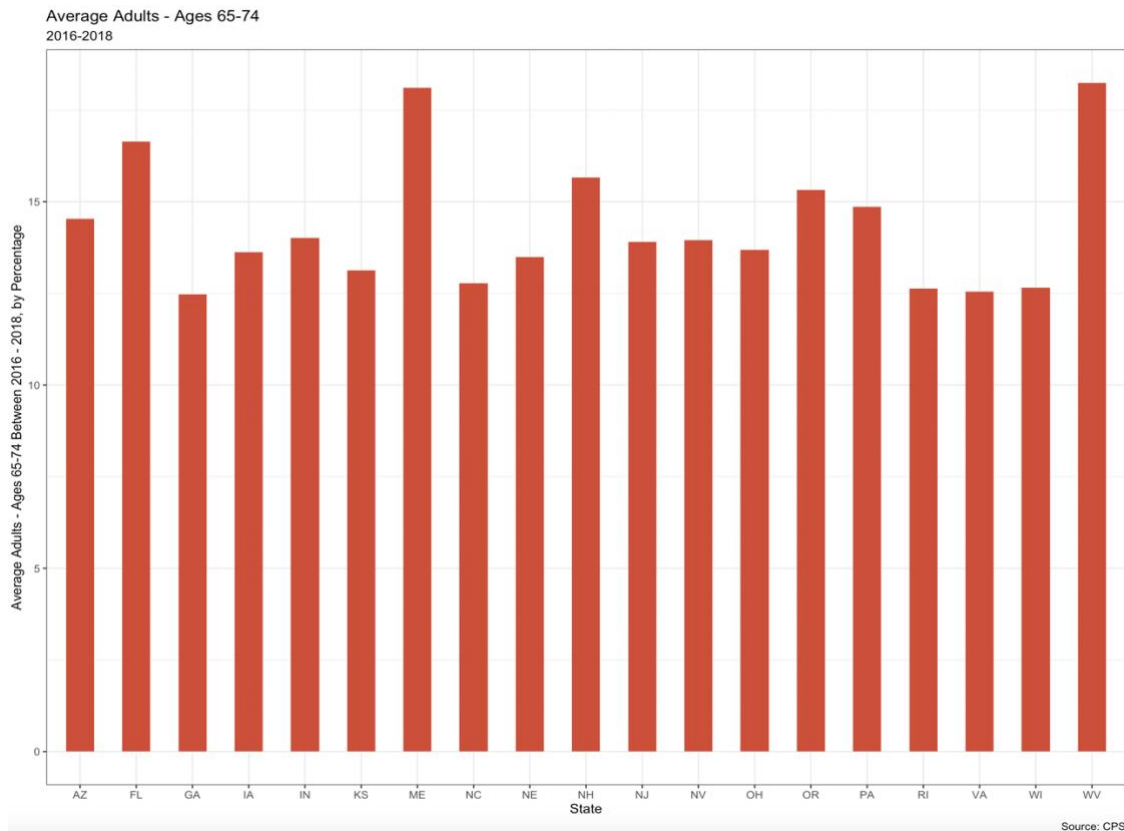**Figure 8.** Average Adults - Ages 65-74 By State, 2016-2018

Figure 8 produces the results of the average total number of elderly adults between the ages of 65-74 between 2016 and 2018. Compared to Figure 7, this graph appears to contain values that are more dispersed throughout the country and, unlike the racial demographics in Figures 5 and 6, not bound to one particular region. In fact, they appear to be located in various states across the country, most notably in Maine (17%), West Virginia (17%), and Florida (16%). At the lower end, Georgia, Kansas, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Virginia, and Wisconsin all report average percent totals of elderly citizens to be at around 11 to 12%. The variance of the dependent variable is 2.98 and the standard deviation is 1.73, which are numbers similarly reported in Figure 7, in which the low variance and standard deviation of this variable both indicate a relatively homogeneous level of variability across this normal distribution and a minimal departure from the mean of 14.37. This is also better explained by this figure's range of 12.5% to 18.2 % of the average number of elderly adults. Given the historically high turnout of elderly voters, Figure 8 provides critical context for predicting and analyzing voting activity and behavior.

Figure 9. Average Total Adults with a High School Education, 2016-2018
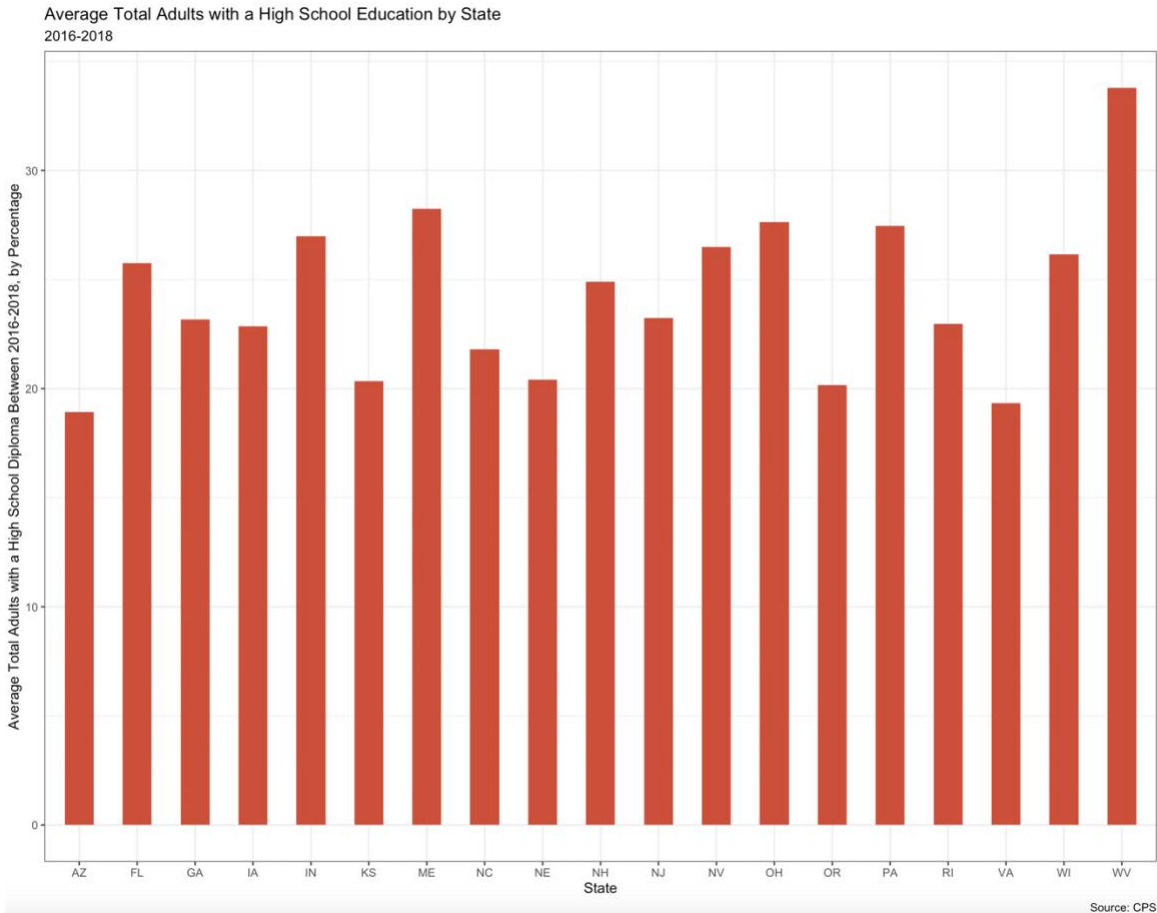
Figure 9 reports on adults with only a high school level education by state, specifically

the average number of adults who only attained a high school diploma and nothing higher. Maine

and West Virginia appear to be states with the highest percentage of citizens in this education

class among their population, with a respective 28% and 34% high school education population

total. By contrast, Arizona and Virginia have some of the lowest percentages of adults in this

education category, both with about a 19% total among them. With a variance of 14.02, Figure 9

reports a higher degree of variability, especially when the standard deviation is 3.74 units apart

from the mean of 24.28. Unlike my previous descriptive statistics, it is more difficult to

generalize the region where most of these citizens reside, as most of people of this group seem

do not seem to be bound to any particular region on the country. Moreover, these states differ in terms of population density and quantity of urban and rural areas of the state.

Figure 10. Average Total Unemployed Adults by State, 2016-2018
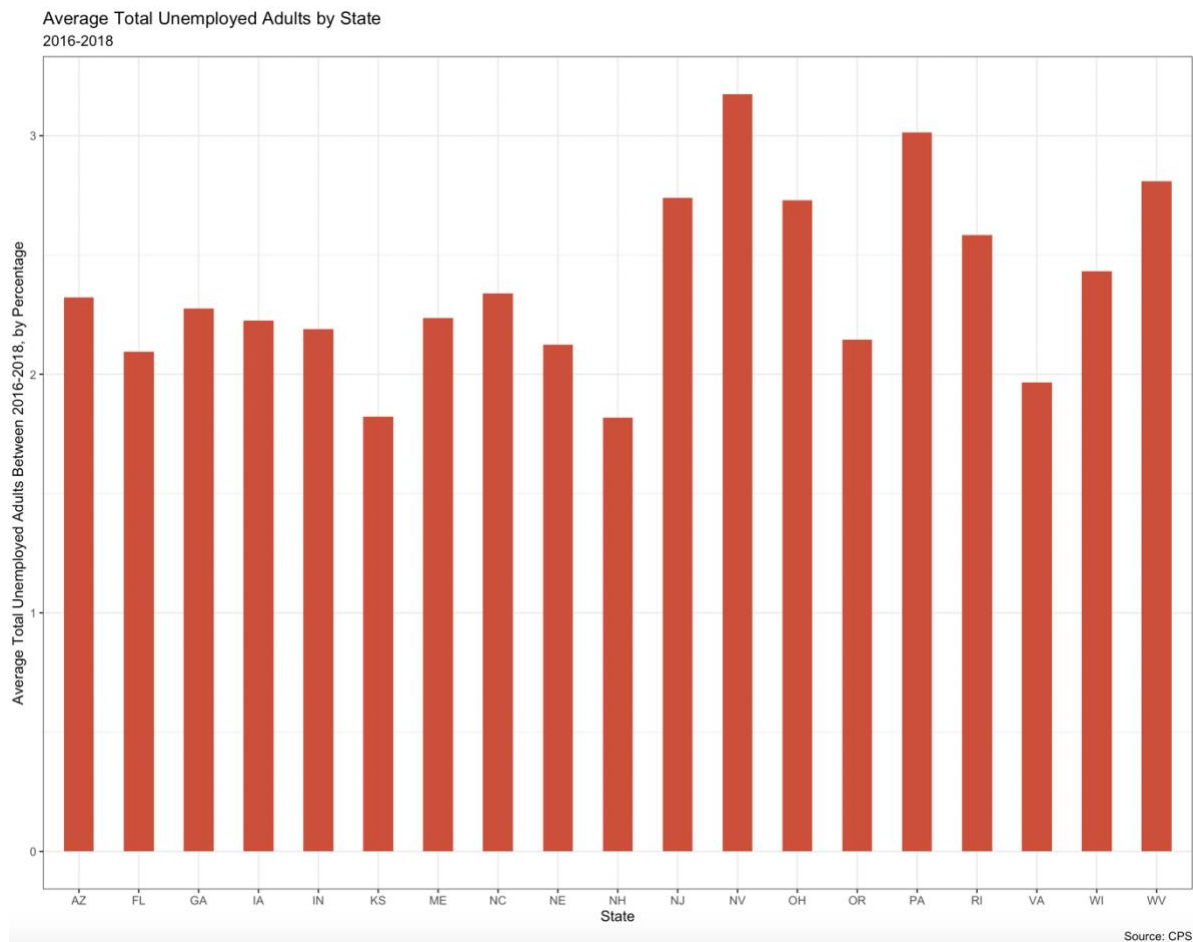
Next, I turn to Figure 10, which details the results of the average unemployed adults by percentage in each state. The graph indicates that between 2016 and 2018, Nevada (3.18%), Pennsylvania (3.01%), New Jersey (2.74%), and Ohio (2.73%) possessed the highest number of unemployed adults, which are percentages reflected in the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BOLS) for 2018.[4] On the other side, of this Kansas, New Hampshire, and West Virginia have unemployment rates that do not go above 2%. Unsurprisingly, the variability of Figure 10 is

relatively homogeneous because of the low variance of 0.14, as the data points are not that far

from the mean of 2.36 with a standard deviation of 0.37. This is better emphasized by the

figure's range of 1.82 to 3.17, showing how small the margins are. Also, with a median of

2.08%, Figure 10 helps showcase the relatively low rate of unemployment during this time.

Unemployed adults are not restricted to any certain area and, unlike the other models, are not

solely located in urbanized regions or politically competitive "swing states." However, more

analysis is needed on these states' overall economic situation to understand the county's

economic improvements.

Figure 11. Average Total Low Median Household Income Adults by State, 2016-2018
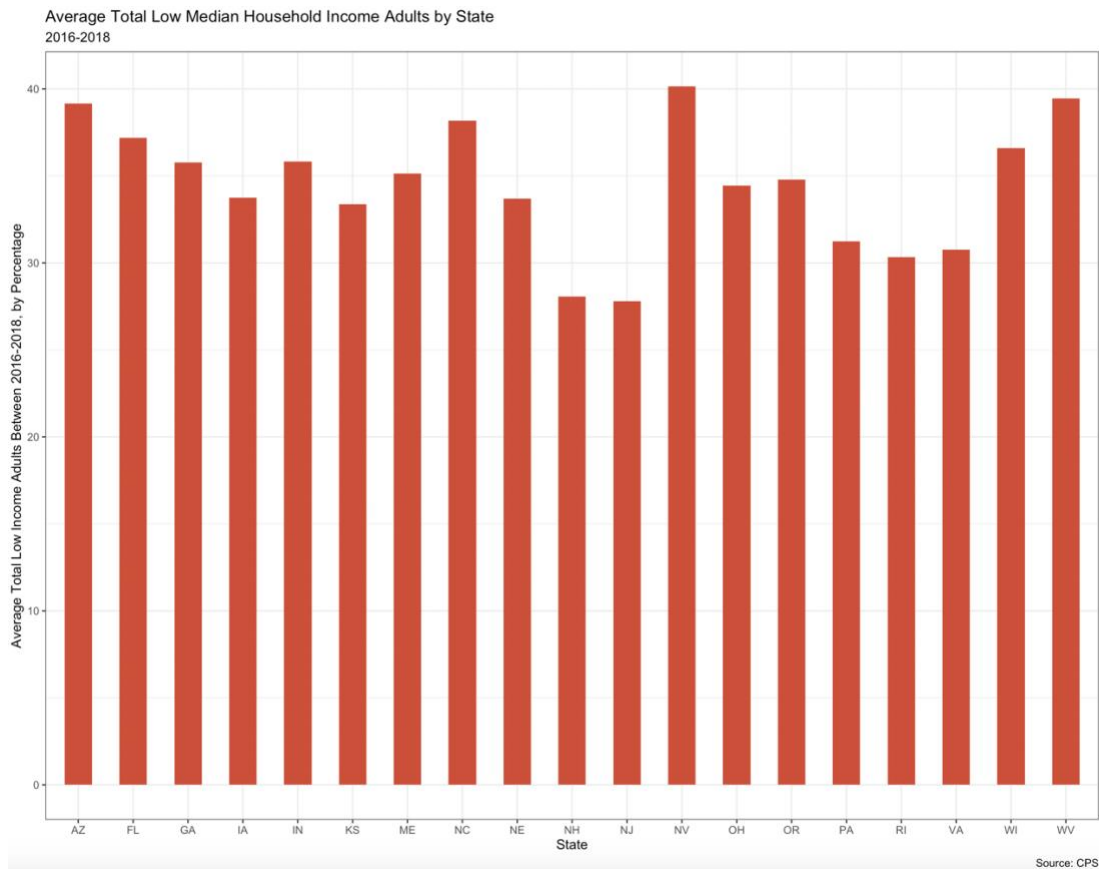
The last descriptive statistic that I highlight is presented in Figure 11, which reports on the total number of low-income residents by state, based on their median household income. The data in this bar chart indicates that states encompassing more rural regions have the highest number of low-income residents, with Nevada containing the most at an average of 40 % over the two election cycles in this normal distribution. Arizona and West Virginia list similar figures for their low-income citizens, both hovering around a 39% of low median household income adults. On the lower end of this dependent variable, New Hampshire and New Jersey both seem to be reporting the lowest numbers of low median household income residents, with an average of about 28%. Judging by the closeness of the data points, this graph is reporting a low level of variability compared to Figure 10, as this graph presents a variance of 12.44 and a departure from the mean of 34.62 with a standard deviation of 3.53. Figure 11, as well as the content in Figures 9 and 10, are all intended to provide context for the overall socioeconomic situation in the states observed in the dataset used for the regression models.

Table 1. The Difference Between the 2014 Midterm Election and the 2016 Presidential Election, Difference-In-Difference Test.

	Coefficient	Std. Error	T-Value	P>z
Constant	0.0781	0.0711	1.10	0.2733
Voter ID Law, 2014-2016	-0.3212	0.1760	-1.82	0.0697
% Hispanic Total	0.0849	0.0914	0.93	0.3540
% Black Total	-0.2341	0.1049	-2.23	0.0269
% Female Total	0.5872	0.0921	6.37	0.0000
% Sixty-Five – Seventy-Four	-0.3494	0.1093	-3.20	0.0016
% High School Diploma	0.0218	0.1532	0.14	0.8871
% Unemployed	0.3606	0.1109	3.25	0.0014
% Low Median Household Income	-0.2113	0.0748	-2.82	0.0053
R^2 = .44				
N = 185				
Significance Level: 0.05				

In my Table 1 regression model, I focus on the voter turnout differences between the 2014 midterm election and 2016 presidential election while controlling for voter ID law implementation and other demographic variables. This table represents about a 19.3% difference in turnout between the midterm election and the presidential election.[5] Based on the high t-values that exceed the absolute value of 2 and the low p-values below .05, Table 1 reports statistically significant results for black, female, elderly, unemployed, and low median household income adult variables. This excludes Hispanic and high school educated adults, whose values do not cross the threshold of statistical significance, meaning that it is difficult to determine if an effect was preset and thus the null is accepted. In terms of the turnout alpha of .0781, it becomes the intercept in this multiple regression when both the control variables of voter ID laws and demographic variables are both zero at a confidence level of 95%. The first variable to cross the

level of statistical significance was the African American adult control variable. For every one

unit change of African Americans in the 19 observed states, there was a -0.2341 decrease in the

level of turnout. The standard error of 0.1049 represents the space between the observed data and

the line of regression, while the high t-value and low p-value prove that the variable is

statistically significant when the alpha is 0.05, indicating that the risk of finding a difference was

low. At this alpha level, I can reject the null of no relationship between the Black population and

voter turnout and assert that there is a negative relationship present in this effect.

Among the other statistically significant variables, a similar negative phenomenon can be

traced with the elderly adult and the low median household income variables. In terms of the

elderly adult variable, the t-value of -3.20 and p-value of 0.0016 cross the level of statistical

significance and a one-unit change in elderly voters relates to a -0.3494 decrease in the level of

voter turnout. With the same reasoning of statistical significance, a one-unit change increase in

low median household income voters is attributed to a -0.2113 decrease in voter turnout. With

the alpha at 0.05, I can assert that the null hypothesis of both elderly voters and low median

household income voters is firmly rejected with a negative relationship to voter turnout. In fact,

of all of these statistically significant variables, the African American, elderly, and low income

variables all trend in a negative direction, suggesting a negative effect when controlling for voter

ID laws as well as the other demographic controls.

The most notable statistically significant result comes from the female adult variable,

which reports a high t-value of 6.37 and a low p-value of 0, indicating a positive impact on

women. To put it another way, a one-unit change in the value of female adults occasions a .5872

increase in voter turnout, which is more than half a percentage point. In fact, the female

variable's coefficient of 0.5872 is the highest compared to the other control variables and

suggests that as the mean increases, the value of voter turnout increases. I can claim with 95%

confidence that the null hypothesis is rejected and that there is a strong positive correlation of

voter turnout and female adults. In addition to the female adult variable, the variable representing

unemployed adults also crossed the level of statistical significance and trends in a positive

direction by a rate of 0.3606. The null of this variable also can be rejected with a significance

level of 0.05. The voter ID law, Hispanic adult, and high school diploma variable did not cross

the level of significance. Based on the correlation coefficient (R_2), the postulated relationship of

these variables is explained by 44% of voter turnout variation, so 56% of the random variation in

voter turnout is thus unexplained by these control variables.

Table 2. The Difference Between the 2016 Presidential Election and the 2018 Midterm Election, Difference-In-Difference Test.

	Coefficient	Std. Error	T-Value	P>z
Constant	0.0917	0.0652	1.41	0.1613
Voter ID Law, 2016-2018	-0.8483	0.2457	-3.45	0.0007
% Hispanic Total	0.0866	0.0882	0.98	0.3278
% Black Total	0.0764	0.1080	0.71	0.4801
% Female Total	-0.6955	0.1102	-6.31	2.17e-09
% Sixty-Five – Seventy-Four	0.2053	0.0967	2.12	0.0352
% High School Diploma	0.0024	0.0916	0.03	0.9787
% Unemployed	-0.1216	0.0688	-1.77	0.0785
% Low Median Household Income	0.3673	0.0770	4.77	3.84e-06
R_2 = .3728				
N = 185				
Significance Level: 0.05				

My second model in Table 2 concerns voter turnout differences in the 2016 presidential

election and 2018 midterm election, while controlling for the same demographic variables as in

Table 1. Much like Table 1, there is a noticeable difference in overall turnout, with an estimated

14% turnout difference between these two elections. However, Table 2 differs from the outputs

in Table 1 by reporting statistically significant results for the main voter ID law independent

variable, as well as the female, elderly, and low median household income variables. The Black,

Hispanic, high school educated, and unemployed variables did not cross the necessary statistical

significance threshold in the Table 2 model. With high t-values and p-values, this pattern

suggests that a statistically significant relationship cannot be affirmed among these four variables

and, therefore, the null hypothesis is retained. Table 2's constant of .0917 becomes the intercept

of this multiple regression when all of the control variables reach 0 at a confidence level of 95%.

In terms of the statistically significant variables from this regression model, the voter ID

law variable met the requirements of statistical significance with a -3.453 t-value and a low

0.0007 p-value. For every one unit change in the value of the voter ID law variable, a -0.8483

decrease was occasioned for the level of voter turnout. The space between the regression line and

observed data for this variable is the standard error of 0.2457. With 95% confidence, I can reject

the null and claim that there is a negative relationship present between the implementation of

voter ID laws and voter turnout between 2016 and 2018. Much like Table 1, a similarly large

negative relationship is also apparent in the female adult variable, as it also reports statistical

significance with a high t-value of -6.312 and a low p-value of 2.17e-09. For this female adult

variable, a one unit change relates to a -0.6955 decrease for the female control variable, while

controlling for other demographic variables and voter ID law enactment. Given that these

numbers trend in a negative direction, I can claim with 95% confidence that the null is rejected

and that there is a negative relationship in this effect. With this particular variable, the

relationship between female adults and voter turnout is explained by 16.59% of the variance. The remaining 83.41% could be explained by other racial and demographic factors.

Furthermore, two other variables reached statistical significance and trended in a positive direction: elderly adults and low median household income adults. The elderly adult variable reported a t-value that just passes the limit for statistical significance, with a 2.122 t-value, accompanied by a 0.0352 p-value. As the average one-unit change increases for elderly voters, voter turnout increases too at 0.2052, while controlling for other variables. Similarly, I also see that this variable trends in a positive direction because of the low median household income variable's t-value of 4.771 and very small p-value of 3.84e-06. This conclusion can be drawn because with every one unit change in the value of this control variable, there is also a 0.3673 increase in the dependent variable of voter turnout, with a positive relationship associated with this effect. Therefore, I claim at the 0.05 significance level that the null hypothesis of no relationship is rejected as there is in fact a positive relationship with the turnout of elderly and low income adults. Based on the correlation coefficient (R_2) of this regression table, the assumed relationship of all of these control variables is explained by 37.28% of the variation of voter turnout, so 62.72% of the random variation of voter turnout is consequently unexplained by these control variables.

Table 3. The Difference Between the 2014 Midterm Election and the 2018 Midterm Election, Difference-In-Difference Test.				
	Coefficient	**Std. Error**	**T-Value**	**P>z**
Constant	0.2139	0.0919	2.33	0.0211
Voter ID Law, 2014-2018	-0.6087	0.1880	-3.24	0.0014
% Hispanic Total	0.5177	0.0947	5.47	0.0000
% Black Total	0.2719	0.1190	2.29	0.0235
% Female Total	-0.4497	0.1169	-3.85	0.0002
% Sixty-Five – Seventy-Four	-0.2805	0.1039	-2.70	0.0076
% High School Diploma	0.4001	0.0963	4.15	0.0001
% Unemployed	-0.1155	0.0801	-1.44	0.1510
% Low Median Household Income	-0.1246	0.0823	-1.51	0.1319
R^2 = .2637				
N = 185				
Significance Level = 0.05				

Lastly, Table 3 reports the data from my third multiple regression model based on the difference between two midterm elections in 2014 and 2018. This model contrasts with the previous two models because it focuses on two similar elections exactly four years apart while controlling for the same demographic variables. Continuing to depart from the previous two turnout models, Table 3 reports fairly consistent statistically significant values that impact most of the control variables, with the exception of the unemployed and low-income variables. In terms of these two variables not crossing the threshold of statistical significance, all have low t-values and high p-values above the statistically significant threshold of 0.05, respectively at 0.1510 and 0.1319. This pattern suggests that a significant relationship between voter ID laws cannot be affirmed and, therefore, the null hypothesis is unable to be rejected.

Table 3 is the only model to report a statistically significant constant in this regression

table, with a t-value of 2.33 and a small p-value of 0.0211. The constant value of 0.2139

represents the expected percentage of voter turnout when the independent variable of voter ID

laws is equal to 0, for which this value crosses over the y-axis. Not only does the constant appear

to exhibit a positive effect, but the two racial variables also appear to showcase positive effects.

The Hispanic variable crosses the threshold of statistical significance at a high 5.47 t-value and a

low p-value of 0. To put these numbers another way, on average, a one-percent increase in the

value of Hispanic adults increases the voter turnout dependent variable by more than half a

percentage point, specifically at 0.5177. The null of this relationship can firmly be rejected with

at a 0.05 significance level as a positive relationship is implied. Similarly, the African American

variable also meets the requirements for statistical significance with slightly lower positive t-

values and low p-values. In a similar vein, with a one-unit increase in the value of African

American adults increases the voter turnout rate by more than a quarter of a percentage point at

0.2719. With 95% confidence, the null can also be rejected as a positive effect is also found. In

addition to the racial demographics exhibiting a positive relationship, the high school education

attainment variable also exhibits a similar positive effect, a one unit change in high school

diploma attainment with a 0.4001 increase in voter turnout. Adding that the standard error of

0.0963 represents the space between the observed data and the line of regression, I can state with

95% confidence that the null is rejected with a positive relationship in effect

By contrast, several variables crossed the limit of statistical significance while trending in

a negative direction, such as the independent variable of voter ID law implementation between

2014 and 2018, which saw a t-value of -3.24 and a low p-value of 0.0014. On average, a one-

percent increase in the voter ID law variable decreases the value of voter turnout by -0.6087,

which is enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis because a negative trend is clearly

indicated. Next, the female and elderly variables both show similar patterns of negative

outcomes and both meet the requirements for statistical significance. For the female adult

variable, a decreasing value of -0.4497 is effected with an average unit change of the voter

turnout variable. This contrasts with the previous two tables, which both reported that the female

adult variable was trending in a positive direction. However, because of the positive effect on

this female adult variable and its high t-value and low p-value, the null hypothesis of no

relationship can indeed be rejected for this variable. Lastly, the elderly adult variable became

statistically and a unit change in this independent control variable subtracts, on average, -0.2805

points of dependent variable of voter turnout. Like the other previous variables, the null

hypothesis can be rejected with 95% confidence as a negative relationship is found here. The null

can also be rejected for the relationship between the voter ID law variable and voter turnout, as

this independent control variable is statistically significant and shows a -0.6087 decrease in voter

turnout for every 1% increase in voter ID laws. According to the correlation coefficient (R_2) of

this multiple regression table, the supposed relationship of all of these control variables is

explained by 26.37% of the variation of voter turnout, so 73.63% of the random variation of

voter turnout is consequently unexplained by these control variables.

Discussion

My results find that voter ID laws produce negative and positive effects on the turnout of different voter categories, including minority groups and voters who have been historically supportive of the Democratic party. Interestingly, these regression tests produced findings that show racial minority groups being particularly impacted by voter ID laws with some of the racial variables trending in both positive and negative directions To understand this connection, I turn again to the existing findings in the voter ID-related literature, such as Bentele & O'Brien's analysis of race and voter ID laws, where the authors state that "the recent wave of restrictive-access legislation is rooted in long-standing racial and classist motivations revived for modern deployment."[1] In other words, the authors claim that these new laws are motivated by attitudes on the basis of race and class today. Bentele & O'Brien also connect criminal disenfranchisement laws to the Republican Party and Republican-controlled state legislatures between 2006 and 2011 in how they used these "long-standing motivations" to craft legislation that hindered these groups' ability to vote. Another similar observation of these racial voting patterns was conducted by Herron & Smith, who after comparing two presidential elections, found that racial and ethnic minority voters were less likely to vote early in the 2012 election, compared to 2008, due to reforms in the early voting process.[2] Although these results deal in a subject matter slightly different from the intentions of my models, these authors still find that legal changes in the voting process have a disproportionate effect on minorities, which matches with my finding of the African American variable trending in a negative direction between 2014 and 2016 in Table 1 ($t = -2.23$, $p = 0.0269$). I believe that these results were appropriately produced as a result of using a difference-in-difference regression model to test these relationships as part of my methodology.

However, it should also be noted that other scholars would disagree with Bentele & O'Brien and Herron & Smith's observations and argue with my findings. For example, Mycoff et al. argue that "voter-ID laws should have little to no effect on aggregate or individual-level turnout, particularly after considering political motivations for voting."[3] These authors ran bivariate regressions, testing the relationship between individual-level voter turnout and the severity of the voter-identification laws implemented between 2000 and 2006. Among their various results, Mycoff et al. find that "a two-way random effects analysis of variance (ANOVA) comparing mean turnout across election year, voter identification laws, and the interaction between the two reveals only the year variable reaching statistical significance." Ultimately, they conclude that by "controlling for the election year, state voter-identification laws produced no statistically significant effects on aggregate state-level turnout. This analysis suggests that from 2000 to 2006, state-level aggregate turnout and voter-ID requirements were unrelated."[4] In addition to controlling for the election year, these authors also control for Hispanic and Black voters, concluding that there is no statistically significant relationship between these voters and voter ID requirements.[5]

While I do not take issue with Mycoff et al.'s research design, I do, however, question the reliability of this study given the present state of voter ID laws, as presented in Bentele & O'Brien and Herron & Smith's different studies. In other words, I would be cautious of the study's conclusions as they may not reflect the current state of voter ID laws, given that the measure of reliability in Mycoff et al.'s assessment is limited to the early 2000s and does not consider the 2013 *Shelby County* v. *Holder* decision. While this is a new development not considered by Mycoff et al.'s study, it should be noted that in Table 3 of my results, both the African American ($t = 2.29$, $p = 0.0235$) and Hispanic adult ($t = 5.47$, $p = 0$) variables met the

requirements of statistical significance trending in a positive direction, indicating a positive

correlation with voter turnout.

A possible reason for this result is the different turnout rates from concentrating on three

different elections. In fact, according to the *Washington Post*, the turnout rate for racial

minorities was low in the 2014 midterms, while the turnout rate was high in the 2016 presidential

election.[6] That being said, while Hispanic turnout was growing from 2012 to 2016,[7] African

American turnout in 2016 decreased by a factor of 7% compared to 2012.[8] However, the 2018

midterm election saw the highest turnout rate of any midterm election since 1978, with about 122

million citizens voting, or about half of the registered voting age population,[9] which included

Hispanics at a 40% turnout rate and African Americans at a 51.4% turnout rate.[10] Perhaps the

positive results reported in Table 3 are a reflection of the increases in the turnout rate over the

course of these three election cycles and may even indicate a stronger presence of minority

voting groups as a result of voter mobilization efforts and the salience of relevant political issues.

This is not to say that voter ID laws have absolutely no negative effect on minority groups, given

that the African American variable in Table 1 trended in a negative direction and that I am

confident in my methodology of using a difference-in-difference test to uncover these results. As

a matter of fact, other scholars and resources have also supported my original hypothesis, such as

the Public Religion Research Institute's (PRRI) poll, which finds that Hispanics are less likely to

be familiar with the voting requirements for the state because of the English-Spanish language

barrier.[11] Specifically, 23% of Hispanic Americans, according to this PRRI poll, are "not sure

about the eligibility of non-citizens to vote in their state," and about 60% of Black Americans are

not sure about their ability to vote under their state law if they are late in paying their

taxes.[12] PRRI's poll supplements the work of Bentele & O'Brien and Herron & Smith by adding

the element of real-world difficulty directly from the groups that are the most impacted by these restrictive voter ID laws. Due to these conditions, I believe that other spurious elements are at work that affects the voter turnout rate in addition to the effects voter ID laws have on minority groups, including political salience of issues, grassroots mobilization, level of competition, and voting in opposition to the party in power. Given these new developments, it would be fair to reject the conclusions made by Mycoff et al. of there being no statistically significance between voting laws and racial minorities. Upon observing the results of previous and existing scholars and sources, my hypothesis is not totally supported by my findings. but I gather that voter ID laws still impact minorities negatively and that the positive results of Table 3 can be explained by other confounding factors at work during these election cycles. In this case, I would encourage future researchers to examine the relationships among these possible confounding connections, minority groups, and voter ID laws.

Likewise, the strong results produced in Tables 1, 2, and 3 encourage me to examine the relationship between voter ID laws and their impact on female voter turnout. Given that there was a positive relationship in the first table and a strong negative effect in Tables 2 and 3, it is important to understand the effects present in these regression models. In terms of voter turnout, the overall turnout rate for the 2014 election was about 41%, with 43% of women making up the electorate.[13] According to the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) at Rutgers University, women have voted in higher numbers compared to men dating back to the 1960s, with about 74 million women and 64 million men voting in the 2016 presidential election, which is about 63% of eligible female voters for that election.[14] Additionally, the Census Bureau points out that 55% of voters in the 2018 midterm election were women, which accounts for a 12-percentage point difference from the 2014 midterm election.[15] Other writers and scholars add to

the Census and the CAWP's data, such as Laurence Arnold of *The Washington Post*, who

recognizes a Gallup poll illustrating the gender gap between female and male voters and how

they vote for Democratic candidates, with more than half of women preferring the Democrat

compared to about 40% of male voters.[16] Similarly, according to the Pew Research Center, about

60% of women voted for the Democratic candidate in the 2018 election.[17]

      With all of this information put together, I would agree that for the past several elections,

more women have voted for the Democratic candidate over the Republican candidate, which is

information about political preferences that may have influenced Republican legislatures'

decision-making in crafting these laws. While the data from these sources reveals that women

vote in higher frequencies, the data from Tables 2 and 3 indicate that turnout was still negatively

correlated with women voters while controlling for voter ID laws ($t = -6,31$, $p = 2.17e-09$), ($t =$

-3.85, $p = 0.0002$), both with large negative coefficients. Regarding the size of the coefficients, I

assume this is due to the fact that women are the largest voting bloc of all of the categories of

voters in this study, which may yield a large coefficient quantity. While women are still voting in

higher numbers, the presence of a voter ID law still has an overall negative affect on their

turnout, which is a point documented in the existing literature.[18] In other words, these findings

provides partial support for my hypothesis that voter ID laws do correlate with lower turnout of

female voters between the 2014 and 2018 elections. Given that this variable encapsulated all

women, regardless of race or ethnicity, future research should be conducted on exploring the

different races and ethnicities of women and their individual connection to voter ID laws. This

research would aim to dispel misconceptions of women's monolithic voting behavior and

understand more about their political preferences.

My regression tables also produced fascinating results for the elderly adult variable, with it only reaching a slight statistical significance ($t = 2.12$, $p = 0.0352$) with a positive effect in Table 2, but two negative effects in Tables 1 ($t = -3.20$, $p = 0.0016$) and 3 ($t = -2.70$, $p = 0.0076$). Since the 1980s, elderly voters have been a reliable and consistent voting bloc, with about 55% of the elderly voting in 2014, 70% voting in 2016 and 65% voting in 2018, according to an Election Project's report.[19] Overall, elderly voters over the age of 65 make up an average quarter share of the electorate between 2014 and 2016.[20] Also, as pointed out in Figure 8, elderly adults make up a substantial portion of the population in the states being studied, with an average population of 14.4%. However, according to the results from Tables 1 and 3, voter turnout decreases as the value of the elderly voter variable increases. The existing literature can perhaps explain this in greater detail, especially Lawrence Norden of the Brennan Center's Democracy Program, who states that the kinds of voter-ID laws that request photo identification negatively affect elderly voters in particular. He claims that "there's no question that citizens over 65 will be particularly impacted. The older you get, the more likely you won't have an ID," as about one in five citizens over the age of 65 do not possess a government-issued ID.[21] Baretto et al. extend Norden's statistics in their report, where these authors study the voter-ID law accessibilities in Indiana and find that the elderly face a disproportionate challenge in obtaining a driver's license compared to voters in other age groups.[22] In fact, Baretto et al. clearly show that this phenomenon is fairly universal across the country, with voters 65 years of age or older voting in lower numbers in recent years, particularly in Western states.[23] Baretto et.al's observation of comparably low turnout connects with Norden's assessment of the lack of accessibility to driver's licenses and other government-approved photo IDs. While this compliments my findings from Tables 1 and 3 of lower turnout, Table 2 reported slight statistical significance with a

positive effect of the elderly adults variable while controlling for other demographic variables in 2016 and 2018. Perhaps this change is a result of the fluctuations of more elderly citizens voting in the 2018 midterms than the 2014 midterms and, as such, this table is reporting the result of that change. One interesting feature not discussed at great length in the literature is the affiliation of the elderly population to any one particular party, perhaps because this age group does not express a unanimous voting behavior and has, in fact, seen shifting party preferences over the past few years, according to Chalabi of *The Guardian.*[24] Although I cannot conclusively assert that this age group supports one political party over another, I can instead interpret, based on the evidence outlined in the existing literature and in my own models, that elderly adults experience negative consequences in turnout and greater difficulties voting in states with voter ID laws, which supports my hypothesis.

Before I ran my regression models, I theorized that voter ID laws would have a discriminatory effect on three particular variables based on their economic scarcity: high school education attainment, unemployment status, and low median household income. With respect to the high school education attainment variable, evidence from Table 3 reports a strong positive correlation while controlling for a voter ID law ($t = 4.15$, $p = 0.0001$), whereas Tables 1 and 2 did not reach the level of statistical significance. In order to understand why the other two variables experienced this phenomenon, I turn to Nagler's analysis of individual voting behavior. He controls for education level and states that "individuals with a high school education are more affected by registration requirements than individuals without a high school degree."[25] Nagler adds more evidence to my original hypothesis of lower educated people being affected by these laws and requirements, which is also assisted by Steven Tenn's study on education and its relationship to voter turnout. Tenn constructs a difference-in-difference test comparing

individuals' age and education of one year to individuals of the previous year using the Current

Population Survey to prove the effect of education. After finding a 6.8 percentage point impact

of the voting process on students registering to vote, Tenn summarizes that "being a student has

a significant positive impact on both voter turnout and voter registration."[26] This suggests that

those who obtain a college-level experience have a greater likelihood of turning out to vote as

opposed to those who only retain a high school education or lower. One could assume that

Nagler would agree with Tenn's findings and concur that a higher education level attainment

yields a positive impact on those who would be more likely to turnout to vote. I also find Tenn's

research design to be sound because of his usage of a difference-in-difference test, which I am

confident was the best approach for both of our papers. In terms of the relationship between

these authors' points and my own findings, Table 3 reports that over the course of three elections

between 2014 and 2018, high school-educated adults have been voting in higher numbers ($t =$

4.15, $p = 0.0001$). In fact, the Pew Research Center finds that in 2016, 63% of the electorate was

made up of those who did not receive a college education, though they do not specify the age of

citizens in this category.[27] It should additionally be noted that Tables 1 and 2 both did not

produce statistically significant results for this variable, as the t-values were low and the p-values

were high both at 0.14 and 0.9787 respectively. I interpret this output as there being no

relationship present between these two election years, as the null is unable to be rejected and the

execution of my testing design did not change. Also, the positive effect in the regression in Table

3 is small and does seem to reflect the difference a voting base can make on election outcomes.

Given how my predictions here were not fully supported and my study does not concentrate on

college-level voters or higher, future studies should consider focusing on voters of all education

attainment categories and ages in recent elections and learn more about their voting behavior in states with voter ID laws.

One of the variables I was surprised to find not meeting the level of statistical significance was the unemployment status variable in Tables 2 and 3. However, the variable did cross that threshold ($t = 3.25$, $p = 0.0014$) in Table 1, between the 2014 and 2016 election. I have attempted to understand this effect from scholars who provide research in this area such as Steven Rosenstone, for instance, who assesses the effect of economic recessions on voter turnout. He observes and catalogues the various changes in median household income using data from the 1970 Current Population Survey and finds that "a 10 percent increase in the proportion of the electorate that is worse off financially reduces turnout by 2.5 percent."[28] The author makes the argument that as the number of poor and unemployed people rise, then the voter turnout will decrease. Rosenstone arrives at the conclusion that economic adversity reduces voter turnout, especially when the number of economically disadvantaged people is increasing.[29] Filer et al. build off Rosenstone's study by connecting unemployed citizens to those in the lowest income bracket, who participate less in political activity than those who earn more income. These important findings highlight the difficulties that certain voters face during economically adverse conditions. Perhaps the fact that the economy has improved relative to 2014 explains the increase in voter turnout. To put this into perspective, the unemployment in 2014 was high at 5.6%, but dropped to 4.7% in 2016, and dropped again to 3.9% in 2018.[30] In other words, the increase of unemployed voter participation between the two years due to an improving economy seems to be the most likely reason for the positive results reported in Table 1. Consequently, my prediction and hypothesis of the unemployed experiencing a lower turnout seems not to apply to this variable as turnout increased with this group.

Lastly, the low median household income variable reached statistical significance in a positive direction in Table 1 ($t = -2.82$, $p = 0.0053$) and a negative direction in Table 2 ($t = 4.77$, $p = 3.84e-06$), with Table 3 not reporting any statistically significant relationship for the variable and with voter turnout changes. This result was a surprise to me, as I had expected there to be a more statistically significant output negatively correlating low income with voter turnout while controlling for voter ID laws. Perhaps the work of Daniel Weeks, the former president of Americans for Campaign Reform, can shine some light on this disparity between the two tables. Weeks' research focused on how low income people have little influence on their elected representatives, with "just two percent of Americans at the bottom of the income and education ladder attend[ing] campaign meetings and rallies or conduct[ing] campaign work, compared to 14 percent of people at the top—a factor of seven to one."[31] Weeks' findings suggest that lower income citizens have less influence than higher income citizens on the political agenda. Weeks points out a theme echoed in Filer et al.'s analysis of high income citizens who participate more in elections than low income people, generally stating that "turnout rises as income increases" [32]. With this observation, those with lower income are already at a disadvantage compared to voters at a higher socioeconomic status. Baretto et al. possess the essence of these authors while focusing more on voter ID laws and find that after performing a chi-square test that voter ID laws significantly lower one's opportunity to vote, including those who are low income.[33] These authors provide the literature to partially support my prediction of low income citizens and low turnout, especially how it applies to the positive effect in Table 2, representing the years of 2016 and 2018.

While Filer et al. and Weeks suggest that this group of people were already voting in lower numbers, I argue that this group is still disadvantaged by voter ID laws. The ACLU and

the Brennan Center unanimously agree that low income citizens are vulnerable to voter ID

laws.34 Both organizations cite Richard Sobel's 2014 study on the cost of accessing a voter photo

identification card, stating that on a national scale among the states with voter ID laws, the

expenses for "free" voter IDs could cost generally lower income voters a collective half a billion

dollars, which as he puts it would "impoverish our democracy."35 To put Sobel's argument into

perspective, even in a situation where states offer voter ID cards to those who cannot obtain a

driver's license, the costs would be unfairly leveraged to low-income citizens. While these

groups are already voting in lower numbers due to other class-based influences on their voting

ability, photo-ID requirements also impact their turnout, as reflected from the data in Table 1 ($t =$

-2.82, $p = 0.0053$). In terms of the positive result of Table 1, I believe that this is a result of

disparities in turnout differences from the 2014 and 2016 elections and perhaps efforts made by

politicians and campaigns to turnout low income voters in order to win elections. Additionally,

the voter ID law independent variable itself produced two negative statistically significant results

in Table 2 and 3, which perhaps indicates the level of voter turnout decrease due to these law

being put in place.

      While I am confident in my analysis of voter ID laws and voter turnout, I think it is also

worth pointing out the possibility of any confounding factors and variables impacting these

changes in turnout. To begin, I look to scholars for any countering relationships that may exist in

this study, including the role of election officials and their administrations and how they directly

influence voters at the local-level, given that much of my data consists of county-level results.

Hale et al. emphasize the direct connection between election administrations and their voters, as

these authors address the need for major reform in intergovernmental activity through these

organizations. They claim that there has been a sense of "diffuse responsibility" and a

"decentralized environment" among the system of election boards in the early 2000s, further

implying the need for a major overhaul of the system itself.[36] While one could argue that the

conclusions in Hale et al.'s study are outdated from two decades ago, the Brennan Center makes

a similar argument, claiming that these administrations are still largely decentralized with several

systemic flaws.[37] Montjoy builds off Hale et al.'s point and the Brennan Center's report by

revealing how this lack of appropriate and effective management from local election boards

directly affects the elections themselves, with more than half of election administrations

experiencing problems of training, recruiting volunteer poll workers, and even securing spaces

for poll stations for election day.[38] Although these studies take place before the timeframe of this

study, both Montjoy and Hale et al. express how a governing body encounters challenges

managing local elections, which possibly explains turnout differences in the 185 observed

counties between 2014 and 2018.

That being said, Kimball et al. attribute partisanship to these local-level election boards,

as they specifically look at these organizations' impact on provisional voting in the 2004 general

elections.[39] More precisely, Kimball et al. examine approximately 4,612 top election officials at

the local-level across the country, as well as state laws crafted by political parties, with data

supplemented from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission's Election Day Survey.[40] In this

study, these authors find evidence of "partisanship in the selection of state rules governing the

counting of provisional ballots [and also] conditional partisan effects in the casting and counting

of provisional ballots."[41] In fact, Kimball et al.'s study captures the polarization within these

political election administrations, claiming that "provisional votes were less likely to be cast and

counted in strongly Democratic jurisdictions if the local election official was a Republican,"

thereby implying a bias against Democrats.[42] This observation does not surprise me, as it reflects

my assumptions of local governments' partisanship and how these political attitudes, in turn, influence the laws created to target likely Democratic voters. Perhaps the fact that a majority of these election officials are individually voted in by constituents incentivizes them to act as politicians by appealing to voters in order to secure their seat on the board through political means. Kimball et.al's assessment of the political undertones of election administrations stresses a recurring theme in my paper: the growing partisan behavior of government and their desire to create and pass biased laws that discriminate against the opposing party. To put it another way, the actions of election administrations, including their managing of elections and implementing voter ID laws, serve political purposes and undermine Democratic voters, which presents a spurious possibility to the predictions and hypotheses I laid out in my research.

One could also point to the advances in voting technology as an alternative reason for the impact on voter turnout in addition to election administrations. As Alters & Kooreman make clear in their study, the advent of touch screen technology in the electoral system negatively affects voter turnout, perhaps due to their tabulation methods of counting ballots.[43] Alters & Kooreman study provisional ballots and find that electronic voting lowers the proportion of residual votes.[44] In other words, Alters & Kooreman's investigation of these new voting technologies has a negative effect on voter turnout of certain provisional voters, which does present a dilemma to my argument laid out in this thesis by introducing this confounding prospect. Alters & Kooreman does not control for any demographic categories of voters who may be more impacted by these touchscreen voting technologies, instead only looking at left-leaning voters between 2000 and 2004. Roseman & Stephenson, however, present literature that is related more to the variables that I controlled for in my models, as they both look at the effects of voting technology on elderly voters and their turnout in Georgia's state-wide races.[45] These

authors predict that older voters would be more apprehensive to "computerized voting" technologies than older voting machines.[46] Roseman & Stephenson conduct a difference-in-difference test on Georgia's 1998 and 2002 gubernatorial elections while controlling for elderly turnout, as well as the percentage of black and lower educated voters, similar to my own model and testing choice.[47] These authors found that the difference in turnout and the demographic control variables all have a negative impact on the turnout of elderly voters, concluding that voting technology decreases elderly voter turnout.[48] Roseman & Stephenson's evidence serves as a precursor to Alters & Kooreman's findings on the negative impact of touchscreen technology on voters. Alters & Kooreman prove that voting technologies inhibit the voter turnout, which perhaps explains the negative effect of elderly voters and voter turnout found in Table 1 and 3 ($t = -3.20$, $p = 0.0016$) ($t = -2.70$, $p = 0.0076$), which is found through the use of the difference-in-difference test. Several of the states in my study have incorporated the kind of technology Alters & Kooreman control for in their study,[49] which opens up a possibility for a confounding connection.

Lastly, the role that election and public officials play in swaying public thinking can certainly be an influential factor in the turnout of the groups I controlled for in this study. While states vary in their implementation of voter ID laws, the rhetoric from politicians remains consistent, much of it circling around the idea of securing the integrity of the ballot box and protecting the election from fraud and deceit. As stated earlier in this paper, Governor Nikki Haley of South Carolina defended her voter ID bill by equating it to showing photo ID at the drug store,[50] thereby personalizing the problem of voter fraud. Similar remarks were made by governors and state legislators around the country, all pointing to voter fraud as a threat to the integrity of the voting system. In fact, voter fraud is not only a frequent excuse for Republican

lawmakers to justify the implementation of voter ID requirements, but it is also, in reality, an overexaggerated myth instigated by these officials. The Brennan Center released a report on the realities of voter fraud, finding that it is "extraordinarily rare," at a rate of up to 0.0025%,[51] proving how the voter fraud argument is itself fraudulent and misleading. Despite these arguments and inaccuracies, Republican politicians use this rhetoric to enact photo identification legislation in the states they govern, which directly impacts those who do not meet the photo identification requirements, as the PRRI survey reported.[52] According to a Washington Post-ABC News poll, 46% of voters describe voter fraud as a frequent issue in elections,[53] which suggests that this rhetoric appears to be having an effect on public opinion. While the rhetoric from top public officials can be seen as confounding the relationship I explored in this paper, I also interpret this pattern as a Republican strategy to ensure their victory in critical elections by passing state voter ID laws that aim to suppress voters and utilizing rhetorical strategies to justify their enacting of these laws. In sum, it is fair to suggest that this rhetoric, though introducing a confounding relationship to my study, serves a political purpose to justify these bills and disenfranchise voters as part of a larger rhetorical strategy to undermine voters.

Recommendations & Conclusions

As stated earlier in this paper, this research fits well into the existing literature of voter identification laws by connecting the implementation of 2014 – 2018 voter ID laws to the turnout of certain groups of Americans. This points to a larger strategy by the Republican party to ensure the consistent victory of competitive races over Democratic candidates. The reasoning for this strategy seems to be motivated by partisan intentions to suppress future victories of the opposing party. After all, these laws increased after the contentious 2000 election and certainly increased after Democratic nominee Barack Obama's victory in 2008, in which he won many of the swing states observed in this paper, not to mention that many competitive races across the country were also won by Democrats at that time. One could also point to the opportunity to shape the long-term political landscape as a reason for creating these new voting requirements, as these laws would make it possible for Republicans to place members of their own party in pivotal agencies and organizations to enact policies that would favor their agenda and benefit their party's control. Additionally, election officials utilized strategic timing to craft voter ID bills that were signed into state law ahead of major elections. To put it another way, Republicans have implemented these laws in response to Democratic victories in the 2000s, thereby revealing political motivations. Although the overall hypothesis of all of the control groups experiencing negative effects is not full supported, this research findings negative turnout rate while controlling for a voter ID law during different election cycles, which is ample evidence to suggest the impact these voter ID laws have on a variety of American citizens.

In order to correct the limitations in this paper, I would encourage future researchers to consider several factors. Firstly, in collecting the top ten most populous counties from each of the 19 observed states, I aimed to collect a representative sample of the population residing in

these states. However, I believe that this may have resulted in a skewed data collection that

recognizes more urbanized communities rather than rural ones, which may have also impacted

the political makeup of the collected sample as well. Future research should amend this potential

problem by expanding my design and collecting data from all of the counties in the observed

states so as to obtain a wider representative sample of the population. Secondly, in running future

regressions that use a variable representing voter ID laws, one should consider distinguishing the

different types of voter ID laws, as well as their level of strictness and the specific forms of

identification that are allowed at the polls. For example, if one were to consider voter ID laws

and their relationship to age, they should take a particular look at what kinds of IDs are allowed

for senior-citizens and other age groups, given that there may be limits in securing proper forms

of ID like driver's licenses and student ID cards to meet their state's requirements. In making

this adjustment, future researchers will be able to predict how the kinds of IDs requested in

certain states impact voters' ability to cast their ballots in states while controlling for

age. Thirdly, in terms of the demographic variables for this study, there were slight limitations in

gauging the specific subgroups under each variable, such as the different types of ethnicities for

the racial categories, age of female adults, and more. Future studies should break down the broad

demographic categories explored in this paper to understand the differences in voter turnout

behavior as well as their political preferences.

　　　　While these research recommendations are worthwhile for conducting tests on possibly

correlated relationships in the future, they do not address the larger systemic issues underlying in

the electoral system, which require reforms. First, I recommend oversight of these election

administrations' activities to ensure that their actions are being conducted without any political

intent. In this same vein, I would encourage state governments to ensure that their election

administration officials run without a political party affiliation attached to them, akin to Abramowitz et al.'s suggestion, which would remove the incentive of appealing to certain voters. If no changes are made in this regard, then the lack of funding and leadership will continue to leave the possibility of partisan behavior open in influencing election outcomes. Montjoy expertly highlighted the lack of appropriate management and organization of these election boards, implying that if these boards were properly funded by the state and were run with more effective leaders, then the flaws present in local elections would be minimized. Of course, not every state and locality can achieve this ultimate goal because of differences in funding and government capability, but if this recommendation were to be implemented in a non-partisan fashion, then the improvements will benefit the electoral system and voters of future elections by not creating a biased institution. Second, I referenced the concerns of touch-screen technology deterring elderly voters, which I believe should be rectified. I recommend state governments invest in voting technology that includes a more user-friendly interface, which would aim to correct the problem of low turnout from elderly voters by not making the prospect of new voting technology would turn away elderly voters, as Roseman & Stephenson highlight. The execution of this change would depend on the effective leadership of the state government and a non-partisan election board, who would ensure the safe rollout of these new machines without any political incentive.

Overall, I conclude that in the most recent major elections, voter ID laws impacted the turnout of certain American citizens, specifically minorities, people of color, women, the elderly, and people of a low socioeconomic status. These laws are partisan in nature, designed to suppress voter turnout, and are part of Republican legislatures seeking to maintain control of political power in their communities by attempting to limit turnout, which ultimately undermines

likely Democratic voters. While this study largely models the design of Burden et al.'s 2017 paper of voting behavior, I add new insight and data on present-day voter identification laws actively influencing turnout to the existing literature. Ultimately, my work illustrates how the new developments to the American voting system are, in fact, obstacles that create challenges for certain groups of citizens who wish to exercise their right to vote. The integrity of our democracy can only be secured and be to able function properly if the right to vote is protected from these suppressive measures.

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