

VOTING IN 2010: Ten Swing States

MISSOURI

The State of Missouri once again is commanding national attention as a swing state. Thankfully, Missouri does have a number of good election laws and procedures in place offering promise of a smooth election. For example, Missouri has become a national leader in NVRA implementation, Missouri permits voter challenges only on Election Day, and Missouri is the only state that has a specific law that very directly targets deceptive practices. That said, the state also has some problematic procedures as detailed below.

POLITICAL OUTLOOK

- A US **Senate** race is in play. Secretary of State Robin Carnahan (D) and US Rep. Roy Blunt (R) are very close in the polls.
- Missouri's 4th **Congressional District** may also be competitive, with Armed Services Committee chairman Ike Skelton (D) facing his first serious challenge in years.

OBSTACLES TO VOTING

- The **voter registration deadline** falls 27 days prior to the election, effectively barring some interested citizens from registering and voting.
- Although Missouri allows for a wide range of types of ID that can be presented, voters who do not bring the right **ID** to the polls on Election Day cannot vote and will not receive a **provisional ballot**.
- **Provisional ballots** cast in the wrong precinct are completely disregarded.
- Any voter may **challenge** any other voter on Election Day and the final determination of whether the voter may vote by a regular ballot is left to the majority of election judges at the polling place.
- Individuals who are on probation or parole for a **felony** are not eligible to vote.
- Election officials do not conduct any formal **outreach for immigrant or language minority voters**.
- Missouri has not included an effective 45-day requirement in its **MOVE** implementing legislation. Clerks have three days in which to respond to requests.

EXEMPLARY VOTING LAWS/ PROCEDURES

- Missouri is the only state that has a law very directly addressing **deceptive practices**. The law prohibits knowingly providing false information about election procedures for the purpose of preventing any person from going to the polls.
- After a federal judge found the state's Department of Social Services to be in violation of the National Voter Registration Act and ordered immediate compliance in July 2008, **voter registrations at public assistance agencies** have increased dramatically.

ARIZONA

COLORADO

ILLINOIS

KENTUCKY

LOUISIANA

MICHIGAN

MISSOURI

NEVADA

NORTH CAROLINA

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WHAT THE CHIEF ELECTIONS OFFICER CAN DO BEFORE ELECTION DAY

- Reassess the interpretation of Missouri law and court cases with respect to **provisional ballots and voters without sufficient voter identification**. Make extra efforts early on to educate voters about the **ID law** and how to get the requisite ID.
- Make sure voters and poll workers alike know the correct polling place *and* the correct precinct to ensure they will **not cast a “placebo” provisional ballot**.
- Provide clear instructions to elections judges as to the criteria regarding the voting rights of voters whose **eligibility is challenged** at the polling place. Ensure citizens know of ramifications for frivolous, fraudulent or discriminatory vote caging and challenges.
- Work with community organizations to conduct more voter **outreach to immigrant and language minority voters** and post Spanish language translated information and materials on the website as soon as possible.
- Establish a clear system for detecting misinformation campaigns and a plan for how the office will **respond** to them to ensure voters have the true information immediately.

In advance of the mid-term elections, Common Cause and Dēmos will release a new report that finds election policies in 10 swing states could disenfranchise voters and impact election results. The report, “Voting in 2010: Ten Swing States,” looks at Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, and Ohio, summarizing each state’s practices, and providing a set of recommendations for improvement.

To view the full report, visit **demos.org/swingstate**
or **commoncause.org/swingstate**.

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