

SAVE Act sparks debate over voter access, student impact at FAMU

By Starr McKay



TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — A new voting bill being discussed in Congress could change how people register to vote in the United States. The Safeguarding American Voter Eligibility act, also known as the SAVE Act, is raising questions for students at Florida A&M University about whether voting could become harder.

The Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act would require people to show proof that they are U.S. citizens when they register to vote in federal elections. This proof could include a passport, birth certificate or naturalization papers.

Most do not have to show these documents when they register. Instead, they sign a form saying they are citizens under penalty of perjury.

Supporters of the bill argue that it is necessary to safeguard election security and ensure that only eligible citizens are able to vote.

“Only U.S. citizens should vote in U.S. elections, and the SAVE Act ensures that states take common-sense steps to verify citizenship,” said Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, one of the bill’s sponsors.

House Republican leaders have said the proposal is meant to strengthen trust in elections by tightening registration rules.

Critics, however, say the bill could make it harder for eligible voters to register, especially young people, students and others who may not have easy access to official documents.

The Brennan Center for Justice, a nonpartisan organization that focuses on democracy, voting rights, and legal reform, found in a recent report that “there is no evidence of widespread noncitizen voting in federal elections, and proof-of-citizenship requirements could block eligible voters from registering.”

At Florida A&M University, students are beginning to think about how the proposal could affect them if it becomes law.

“I had seen a few posts about it online, but I didn’t fully understand it at first,” said Lyanna Gibson, an out-of-state FAMU student. “If it requires additional documentation, it could make things more difficult for students who don’t have everything readily available.”

Another concern is how students manage documents while living away from home.

“As an out-of-state student, most of my important documents are back home, not here in Tallahassee,” said Maureen Holton, another Florida A&M University student. “If I had to provide those just to register or update my voter information, it would definitely add an extra step.”

Under current law, college students can vote either in their home state or in the state where they attend school, as long as they meet residency requirements and register in only one location.

Voting rights groups argue that stricter rules could discourage participation.

“Documentary proof requirements create unnecessary barriers that can prevent eligible citizens from voting,” said the League of Women Voters in a statement.

Some supporters say the bill is about restoring confidence in elections.

“We must restore confidence in our elections and ensure that only eligible citizens are voting,” House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., said during remarks on election legislation.

The SAVE Act has passed in the House of Representatives but has not become law. It is still under consideration in the Senate.

For now, students at Florida A&M University are watching closely.

In a city where thousands of college students split residency between home and campus, the outcome could shape how future voters register and participate in elections.

For many students, the question is whether voting will remain simple and accessible or become more complicated in the future.