

## Speak out against mistreatment of student voters

### Letter

By [Harini Kidambi](#)

**Published:** Sunday, May 1, 2011

**Updated:** Sunday, May 1, 2011 23:05

You are busy. You have class, you work, you study, you are involved on campus and then you wake up the next morning and do it all over again. Yet you still try to find time in your completely filled schedule to cast your ballot on Election Day — to have your voice heard. If some states have their way, it may not be that simple. Election reform laws have been introduced in 31 states that will require college students to find more time in their busy days to exercise their right to vote.

Three types of election reform laws have been proposed around the country. These legislative proposals include eliminating same-day registration and pre-registration, creating mandatory voter ID cards and preventing college students from voting in their college towns. No such law is being proposed in New Jersey — but imagine if it were. It would mean that a University student who has not established residency in New Brunswick or Piscataway would need to travel all the way to their hometown on Election Day in order to cast their vote, unless they had specifically requested an absentee ballot. For some of us, this might mean a half hour, but for others it may be two or three hours. It would mean that when you go to vote, your college ID would not be sufficient — you would be required to fill out extra paperwork ahead of time to get a state-sanctioned voter ID card. It would mean that if you haven't pre-registered, you would not be allowed to vote because same-day registration would be abolished.

Legislators proposing these reforms have explained that these laws will effectively combat voter fraud, and they are rightly concerned about the issue. However, there is no doubt that these reforms will place a significant burden on young people's access to the voting booth. Some legislators have even revealed that this is exactly what they are hoping for. William O'Brien, the Speaker of the House of New Hampshire, which is one of the states considering the legislation, claimed that the reason for the law is that youth "don't have life experience and ... just vote their feelings and ... it's not fair," he ended by stating that young voters are "foolish."

I disagree. What is not fair is the idea that "life experience" should determine your right to vote. What is not fair is that the rights of older citizens are not being similarly impinged upon. What is not fair is that the basis of the proposed law itself is that young people are foolish. What is not fair is that we are being

targeted and our right to vote is slowly slipping from our grasp.

We are the Millennials. We will face issues that are completely unique to our generation. We will face exorbitant student loans and debt. We will face a poor job market and economy as soon as we are awarded our diplomas. We will be the workforces paying for government entitlements that we might not even receive when we finally qualify for them. We will be worrying about things no others have had to worry about.

Why should the Millennial Generation allow any other generation to speak for us when they will not face what we will inevitably have to face? Why should we allow our power to vote to be limited?

We are more racially and ethnically diverse, more educated and more technologically savvy than any group that has preceded us. We are expected to outgrow the baby boomers in number. We are a force to be reckoned with. We are the Millennials, and we have power that we must use.

Your vote is how you communicate with your government. No one else has the power to do this for you. Your vote symbolizes who you are.

This election reform has not been introduced in our state, but it is something being faced by college-age students all around the country. If you haven't heard about it, find out more. If you don't agree, speak out.

Harini Kidambi is a School of Arts and Sciences junior majoring in political science and public health with a minor in South Asia studies.

