

## 2247 Voter ID Pilots

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### Summary

*Over 40 leading charities and academics, including NUS UK, Operation Black Vote and Stonewall, have called on the government to urgently reconsider the decision to run pilot mandatory voter ID at the local elections in May. They **have written to Chloe Smith MP, Minister for the Constitution and MP for Norwich North. This motion commits UEASU to opposing the rollout of voter ID and it mandates the officers to communicate this to the local Norwich MP and other relevant bodies.***

### Union notes

1. The Government have announced plans to launch voter ID pilots in local elections in May in a move to tackle electoral fraud.
2. Last year there were 28 allegations of impersonation – the type of fraud that voter ID is designed to tackle – out of nearly 45 million votes. That is 1 case for every 1.6 million votes cast.
3. The Cabinet Office, the Electoral Commission and Local Authorities participating in the pilots justify their position by stating that electoral fraud through voter impersonation doubled nationally between 2014 and 2016.
4. Although alleged impersonation rose by 21 to 44, the number of votes cast rose from 29.1 million to 63.8 million.
5. Decades of international studies show that restrictive identification requirements are particularly disadvantageous to certain voter groups who are less likely to possess approved ID for a variety of socio-economic and accessibility reasons.
6. According to the Electoral Commission, 3.5 million electors – 7.5% of the electorate – do not have photo ID. Limiting acceptable ID to passports and photographic driving licences would see potentially 11 million electors, or 24% of the electorate, without acceptable ID.
7. That a coalition of charities and academics have written to Chloe Smith, MP for Norwich North and Minister for the Constitution, asking her to *urgently reconsider the decision to run pilot mandatory voter ID at the local elections in May.*
8. The coalition are concerned that mandatory voter ID would damage turnout and undermine engagement among already disadvantaged and excluded groups – and worry the trials are a *fait accompli* for a national roll-out.
9. The coalition of groups argue voter ID reforms present a significant barrier to democratic engagement and could disadvantage young people, older people, disabled, transgender, BAME communities and the homeless.

10. Darren Hughes, CEO of the Electoral Reform Society has said: 'Electoral fraud is a serious issue, but voting ID is using a sledgehammer to crack a nut.'
11. Students face issues with regard to voting that other people do not, and members of UEASU live within the Norwich North constituency.
12. Since the last election, headlines such "Thousands of students may have voted TWICE for Jeremy Corbyn in General Election" (The Sun), have appeared in the press.
13. The Electoral Commission, which oversees elections had "no evidence of widespread abuse," in regards to students voting twice.
14. Cat Smith, Shadow Minister for Voter Engagement and Youth Affairs, opposes the roll out of Voter ID, and the Labour Party have launched a petition against the changes.

### **Union believes**

1. The voting system is already unrepresentative and exclusionary, and access to voting should be made easier and not harder.
2. Many students do not have accurate official ID with their current address due to changing living arrangements and associated costs
3. These type of actions are straight out of the Republican playbook in the US, take away people's ability to engage in the democratic process and stay in office whether the population like it or not.
4. The desire of political candidates and parties to suppress turnout rather than engage in the democratic process is disappointed and disrespectful to the democratic system.
5. The need of formal identification to vote is exclusionary and affects those who do not have the income or resource to obtain ID.
6. The current voting system of first past the post is not fair or representative, with millions of people put off from voting due to the lack of impact it can have.
7. That only changes across education, civil society and political life will bring about true engagement with voters of all types.

### **Union resolves**

1. To mandate the Campaigns and Democracy Officer to write to Chloe Smith MP, and other relevant people or bodies, urging reconsideration on the voter ID pilots.
2. To work with NUS in campaigns against the introduction of restrictive voting laws, and movements towards more representative voting systems.
3. To support campaigns that attempt to encourage voting from groups across society, and campaigns that work to explore and explain the political system.
4. To campaign for proper political and citizenship education across school curriculums in the UK.