

Fact Focus: Only some driver’s licenses usable for voter registration under the SAVE Act

By **Melissa Goldin**
The Associated Press

Misleading claims about the impact on voter registration by the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act, or SAVE Act, continue to spread on social media, with elected officials on both sides of the aisle putting their own spin on it.

Senator Tammy Duckworth, a Democrat from Illinois, wrote in an X post: “Under the SAVE Act, you cannot use your driver’s license to register to vote. Republicans want you to buy a passport instead. If you can afford one. This is a modern-day poll tax.” Senator Mike Lee, a Republican from Utah, replied in his own X post, which included Duckworth’s, “this is a lie” and cited a section of the legislation that requires states to establish their own processes for voter registration applicants who cannot provide the required proof of U.S. citizenship.

But the truth lies somewhere in the middle. Here’s a closer look at the facts.

CLAIM: People would not be allowed to use their driver’s license when registering to vote under the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act.

THE FACTS: This is missing context. Driver’s licenses that include verification of citizenship, such as an Enhanced Drivers License (EDL), could be used for voter registration in a limited number of states if the SAVE Act passes. It has passed the house and is now in the senate. However, those without such a license or who live in states or territories that don’t issue them would need to provide additional documentation.

“Most driver’s licenses, the purpose of it is to license you to drive,” said Pamela Smith, president and CEO of Verified Voting, a nonpartisan organization. “It’s not designed to prove your citizenship. And so the requirement to prove your citizenship is sort of separate and beyond.”

Judge orders White House ballroom construction to halt in a ruling that leaves Trump seething

By **Michael Kunzelman and Will Weissert**
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A federal judge has ordered the Trump administration to suspend construction of a \$400 million ballroom it demolished the East Wing of the White House to make space for, barring work from proceeding without congressional approval.

U.S. District Judge Richard Leon in Washington granted a preservationist group’s request for a preliminary injunction that temporarily halts President Donald Trump’s White House ballroom project. He concluded that the National Trust for Historic Preservation is likely to succeed on the merits of its claims because “no statute comes close to giving the President the authority he claims to have.”

“The President of the United States is the steward of the White House for future generations of First Families. He is not, however, the owner!” wrote Leon, who was nominated to the bench by Republican President George W. Bush.

The White House quickly filed a notice to appeal while Trump fumed at the ruling. “We built many things at the White House over the years. They don’t get congressional approval,” he told reporters in the Oval Office a short time later.

The ruling was the first major rebuke of Trump’s sweeping efforts to overhaul the White House. But it wasn’t immediately clear what it would mean for a sprawling project in which crews have long since torn down the East Wing, radically transforming the look and feel of the historic grounds.

The judge’s decision came two days before the National Capital Planning Commission, the agency that signs off on construction on federal property in the Washington region, approved the addition. Stephen Staudigl, a spokesperson for the commission, said the judge’s ruling did not affect the schedule.

Carol Quillen, president and CEO of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which filed the lawsuit prompting Leon’s ruling, said, “We are pleased with Judge Leon’s ruling today to order a halt to any further ballroom construction until the administration complies with the law and obtains express authorization to go forward.”

“This is a win for the American people on a project that forever impacts one of the most beloved and iconic places in our nation,” Quillen said in a statement. The group had sued in hopes of obtaining an order pausing the ballroom project until it undergoes multiple independent reviews and receives congressional approval.

The judge acknowledged the complication of stopping work in progress



The Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act requires that when registering to vote in federal elections, people provide “documentary proof of United States citizenship.” This can include REAL ID-compliant identification that confirms citizenship, a valid U.S. passport, or a form of government-issued photo identification that states the applicant’s place of birth. Military IDs and other government-issued photo IDs that do not state place of birth or otherwise confirm citizenship would need to be presented with additional documentation.

People who are legal U.S. residents but not citizens also can obtain a REAL ID. According to the Department of Homeland Security, only five states — Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Vermont, and Washington — issue enhanced driver’s licenses, which are REAL ID-compliant and prove citizenship as well as identity. Other states, such as Montana, South Dakota, Florida, and Iowa, have passed or are considering legislation that requires licenses to include citizenship markers.

“For the vast majority of Americans, a REAL ID would

VOTING HURDLES. Constituents in Illinois cast their votes in a primary election in Chicago on March 17, 2026. Misleading claims about the impact on voter registration by the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act continue to spread on social media. According to the Department of Homeland Security, only five states — Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Vermont, and Washington — issue enhanced driver’s licenses, which are REAL ID-compliant and prove citizenship as well as identity. Only in these five states would a REAL ID driver license be valid to show in order to vote. (AP Photo/Nam Y. Huh)

not be sufficient to register to vote under the SAVE Act,” said Eliza Sweren-Becker, deputy director of the voting rights and elections program at the Brennan Center for Justice. “That’s because most REAL IDs do not have any affirmative indication of U.S. citizenship, which is a part of what the bill would require if a REAL ID were to be used for registration.”

Republicans, including President Donald Trump, have argued that the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act is needed to eliminate instances of noncitizen voting, which is already illegal in federal elections and can lead to felony charges and deportation. Cases where it occurs are rare. Opponents stress that the bill’s proof of citizenship requirements would create an undue burden for many voters due to obstacles such as the costs associated with obtaining a passport and processing times for government documents, including birth or marriage certificates. A recent survey found that more than 9% of voting-age Americans — 21.3 million people — cannot readily access documents proving they are citizens.

Neither Duckworth nor Lee responded to a request for comment.

The SAVE America Act was passed by the house in April 2025 and is currently being debated by the senate. Efforts to end a Homeland Security shutdown that caused severe travel disruptions stalled when Trump linked any deal to his push to pass the act.



Leon suspended enforcement of his order for 14 days, acknowledging that the case “raises novel and weighty issues, that halting an ongoing construction project may raise logistical issues.” He also recognized that the administration would appeal his decision.

The judge ruled that any construction work that’s necessary to ensure the safety and security of the White House is exempt from the scope of the injunction. Leon said he reviewed material that the government privately submitted to him before concluding that halting construction wouldn’t jeopardize national security.

Trump noted that the ruling will allow work on underground bunkers and other security measures around the White House grounds to continue — even though those will be paid for by taxpayers, not the private donors and by Trump himself whom the president has promised will cover the cost of the ballroom.

The Republican president brought handwritten notes into the Oval Office that referenced that part of the ruling, saying, “It talks about we’re allowed to continue building.”

He then offered an exhaustive list of what’s being done to enhance security while the ballroom is built.

“The roof is droneproof. We have secure air-handling systems. You know, bad things happen in the air if you have bad people,” the president said. “We have bio-defense all over. We have secure telecommunications and communications all over. We have bomb shelters that we’re building. We have a hospital and very major medical facilities that we’re building.”

He added, “Think of that for the safety of the president,” and said the ruling means “on that, we’re OK.”

Trump launched the project quickly, catching the public off-guard

The White House announced the ballroom project over the summer. By late October, Trump had demolished the East Wing for a 90,000-square-foot ballroom he said would fit 999 people.

Trump proceeded with the project before seeking input from the National Capital Planning Commission and

BALLROOM PAUSED. Debris is seen at a largely demolished part of the East Wing of the White House on October 23, 2025 in Washington, D.C. A federal judge has ordered the Trump administration to suspend construction of a \$400 million ballroom it demolished the East Wing of the White House to make space for, barring work from proceeding without congressional approval. (AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin, File)

another oversight entity, the Commission of Fine Arts. Trump has stocked both commissions with allies. The trust sued in December.

On February 26, Leon rejected the preservationist group’s initial bid to temporarily halt the ballroom’s construction. He said the privately funded group had based its challenge on a “ragtag group” of legal theories and would have a better chance of success if it amended the lawsuit, which it did.

The administration had said above-ground construction on the ballroom would begin this month. “We are two weeks away,” plaintiffs’ attorney Thaddeus Heuer said during a March 17 hearing. “The imminence is

Continued on page 12

Black Pearl Acupuncture

Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine are great for:

- Acute/Chronic Pain (i.e. neck, back, sciatica & shoulder)
- Treating & Preventing the flu and colds
- Stress Relief
- Headaches/Migraines

www.blackpearlacupuncture.com

Sita Symonette
Licensed Acupuncturist
seasymonettea@gmail.com

Call to schedule an appointment: (503) 308-9363
505 N.W. Ninth Ave., Portland, OR 97209

AFFORDABLE RETIREMENT LIVING

FOR SENIORS 62 YEARS & OLDER

JASON LEE MANOR

1551 CENTER STREET NE • SALEM, OREGON 97301
503-339-7876

- ONE-BEDROOM APARTMENTS WITH FULL SIZED KITCHENS AND LIVING AREAS
- AFFORDABLE RENT WITH FEDERAL RENT SUBSIDIES AVAILABLE
- PLANNED ACTIVITIES, LAUNDRY FACILITY, ELEVATOR, MEETING ROOM, AND LIBRARY
- CONVENIENTLY LOCATED TO SHOPPING, RESTAURANTS, PHARMACY, AND MEDICAL OFFICES

www.JASONLEEMANOR.ORG