

GUEST ESSAY

Chuck Schumer: This Is Trump's Plan to 'Guarantee the Midterms'

March 23, 2026

**By Chuck Schumer**

Mr. Schumer, a Democrat of New York, is the Senate minority leader.

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The Republican effort to undermine the 2026 midterm elections is neither theoretical nor exaggerated. A coordinated, multifaceted campaign is underway — including the attempt to pass the SAVE America Act, which narrowly passed the House last month and which the Senate started debating last week. President Trump has not been coy about his motivations: If Republicans pass the SAVE Act, he said, “it’ll guarantee the midterms.”

Republicans like to pretend that the SAVE Act is a voter ID bill. Though on the surface it appears to be one, something far more insidious lies beneath: a system for purging eligible voters from the electorate — voters who are disproportionately likely to vote against Republicans. In the bill, voter ID comes into play only at the very end of a process designed to systematically disenfranchise Americans.

This purge would begin with the Department of Homeland Security. Under the SAVE Act, every state would be required to turn over its voter rolls to the department — an extraordinary federal intrusion into the state administration of elections. It would hand Washington control over voter eligibility, something Democratic- and Republican-led states have long resisted.

The next step would involve running the voter rolls through an algorithm that would ostensibly root out noncitizens — a program overhauled by Elon Musk and his so-called Department of Government Efficiency, which has already proved dangerously unreliable. In a trial run of the program in Boone County, Mo., more than half of the voters flagged as ineligible were, in fact, eligible American citizens. County clerks in Texas also found many examples of wrongly identified voters. Citizens were removed from the voter rolls anyway.

This is not about stopping widespread voter fraud, which is a myth pushed by Republicans in the first place. Rather, it’s about giving the Department of Homeland Security power to choose who can vote. Don’t forget that Kristi Noem, the disgraced former secretary of the department, said that it was working proactively to make sure “we have the right people voting, electing the right leaders to lead this country.”

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The third step would be to leave purged voters in the dark about what has happened. Under the SAVE Act, if you are purged from voter rolls by the federal government, you may not know that this has occurred until you

show up to vote. The bill imposes no requirement that voters be notified if they are purged. Imagine this happening hundreds of thousands of times across the country on Election Day. It would be pandemonium.

Last, the bill would impose voter ID requirements — not as a safeguard against fraud, but as another barrier to voting. For those who had been wrongfully purged from voter rolls, the SAVE Act would make registering again a bureaucratic nightmare. No longer would a driver's license or another state-sanctioned identification suffice. They would instead have to produce a passport (which only about half of Americans have) or a birth certificate (which many cannot easily access). For a married woman who changed her surname, and whose married name doesn't match the one on her birth certificate, even a birth certificate may not be enough. Some 20 million American citizens lack the required documents to prove citizenship under the SAVE Act.

The bill would also dismantle the most common and accessible ways to register to vote. Mail-in registration? Gone. Registering at churches and college campuses? Illegal. Registering when you get your driver's license or sign up for Social Security? No more. Under the SAVE Act, the only path to register to vote would be in person at a state or local election office.

The burdens of the SAVE Act would fall most heavily on the socioeconomically disadvantaged, the working class and voters of color. They would fall on Americans who cannot spend hours navigating bureaucratic obstacles, on older people who depend on voting by mail, on those without passports, on rural communities far from election offices. In other words: millions of everyday Americans.

Mr. Trump knows his administration is not delivering for the American people. Costs are rising and instability is increasing at home and abroad. Instead of changing course, he is attempting to change the electorate.

Democrats are united in opposing the SAVE Act. We know the right to vote is not a partisan advantage to be engineered or withheld. It is the foundation of American democracy.

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A version of this article appears in print on , Section A, Page 18 of the New York edition with the headline: What the SAVE America Act Would Really Do