

A comprehensive investigation of voter impersonation finds 31 credible incidents out of one billion ballots cast

By **Justin Levitt**

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Note: This is a guest post by Justin Levitt, a professor at the Loyola Law School, Los Angeles and an expert in constitutional law and the law of democracy, with a particular focus on election administration and redistricting.

Voter ID laws are back in the news once again, with two new opinions from the Wisconsin Supreme Court late last week dealing with the state's ID requirement, which would allow people to vote only if they provide certain forms of government-issued ID. The Court made some minor changes to the law but otherwise upheld it. However, the ID requirement is still on hold pending a federal lawsuit.

Part of this litigation — and any rational debate about the issue generally — hinges on two things: costs and benefits. The costs of these sorts of laws vary, because the laws themselves differ from state to state (some are far more burdensome than others). The ostensible benefits, though, are all the same. And in addressing these purported benefits, the Wisconsin Supreme Court blew it. Twice.

First, the court cited the idea that ID laws could enhance public confidence--that is, in theory, the laws might make us feel better about elections in that they might provide some security theater. It turns out, though, that this effect is hard to spot. People in states with more restrictive ID laws don't generally feel better about their elections than people in more permissive states. People who think elections are being stolen, and people who think they're not, each hold on to that opinion no matter what the governing ID rules in their area. The factor that really influences whether people think the elections are fair? Whether their preferred candidates win.

Second, the court said that ID laws can help stop fraud. It then cited an example of recent fraud ... that ID laws aren't designed to stop. Specifically, it mentioned a case in which a supporter of Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker was charged with 13 counts of election fraud, including "registering to vote in more than one place, voting where he didn't live, voting more than once in the same election, and providing false information to election officials," according to an account by Talking Points Memo. Wisconsin's ID law would not likely have prevented any of the alleged violations.

This sort of misdirection is pretty common, actually. Election fraud happens. But ID laws are not aimed at the fraud you'll actually hear about. Most current ID laws (Wisconsin is a rare exception) aren't designed to stop fraud with absentee ballots (indeed, laws requiring ID at the polls push more people into the absentee system, where there are plenty of real dangers). Or vote buying. Or coercion. Or fake registration forms. Or voting from the wrong address. Or ballot box stuffing by officials in on the scam. In the 243-page document that Mississippi State Sen. Chris McDaniel filed on Monday with evidence of allegedly illegal votes in the Mississippi Republican primary, there were no

med on Monday with evidence of allegedly illegal votes in the Mississippi Republican primary, there were no allegations of the kind of fraud that ID can stop.

Instead, requirements to show ID at the polls are designed for pretty much one thing: people showing up at the polls pretending to be somebody else in order to each cast one incremental fake ballot. This is a slow, clunky way to steal an election. Which is why it rarely happens.

I've been tracking allegations of fraud for years now, including the fraud ID laws are designed to stop. In 2008, when the Supreme Court weighed in on voter ID, I looked at every single allegation put before the Court. And since then, I've been following reports wherever they crop up.

To be clear, I'm not just talking about prosecutions. I track any specific, credible allegation that someone may have pretended to be someone else at the polls, in any way that an ID law could fix.

So far, I've found about 31 different incidents (some of which involve multiple ballots) since 2000, anywhere in the country. If you want to check my work, you can read a comprehensive list of the incidents below.

To put this in perspective, the 31 incidents below come in the context of general, primary, special, and municipal elections from 2000 through 2014. In general and primary elections alone, more than 1 billion ballots were cast in that period.

Some of these 31 incidents have been thoroughly investigated (including some prosecutions). But many have not. Based on how other claims have turned out, I'd bet that some of the 31 will end up debunked: a problem with matching people from one big computer list to another, or a data entry error, or confusion between two different people with the same name, or someone signing in on the wrong line of a pollbook.

In just four states that have held just a few elections under the harshest ID laws, more than 3,000 votes (in general elections alone) have reportedly been affirmatively rejected for lack of ID. (That doesn't include voters without ID who didn't show up, or recordkeeping mistakes by officials.) Some of those 3,000 may have been fraudulent ballots. But how many legitimate voters have already been turned away?

Correction: Justin Levitt is a professor with Loyola Law School, Los Angeles; not the Loyola University Law School.

Credible allegations of potential fraud since 2000 that might have been prevented by a rule requiring ID at the polls

Note: tracking the allegations — even those that may end up disproven — can help calibrate an upper bound for the actual existing fraud that ID laws would stop. I am a researcher, and so I am interested in a thorough list: if you have credible information about a specific individual whose vote was stolen by an impersonator at the polls, please tell me. Specific and credible means just that. Not — please — examples like this. And if you have information about an incident below that indicates that it was error rather than fraud, please tell me that as well.

1. May 2014: Ben Hodzic allegedly voted at the polls in the name of his brother in the Catskill School District

Board of Education election in Catskill, NY.[1]

2. Nov. 2013: Mark Atlas allegedly voted at the polls in the name of someone else in the municipal election in Worcester, MA.[2]
3. Sep. 2013: At least four, and possibly 20-24, Hasidic voters in the South Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn, NY, allegedly attempted to vote at the polls under others' names in the municipal primary elections for New York City.[3]
4. Mar. 2013: Kristina Bentrin went to vote at the polls in the Cedar Rapids, IA, special election on a gambling referendum, and was allegedly told that someone had voted in her name.[4] It is not clear whether poll book records were investigated to determine whether the record of voting represented an impersonated signature or a clerical error.
5. Nov. 2012: A vote was apparently cast at the polls in the name of Angela Cooney in the general election in San Diego, CA; there is an Angela Cooney listed as dying 4 years earlier.[5] It is not clear whether the two are the same person, or whether the death reports are accurate, and poll book records do not appear to have been investigated to determine whether the record of voting represented an impersonated signature or a clerical error.
6. Nov. 2012: A vote was apparently cast at the polls in the name of Evan Dixon in the general election in San Diego, CA; there is an Evan Dixon listed as dying 11 years earlier.[6] It is not clear whether the two are the same person, or whether the death reports are accurate, and poll book records do not appear to have been investigated to determine whether the record of voting represented an impersonated signature or a clerical error.
7. Nov. 2012: A vote was apparently cast at the polls in the name of Alejandro Guerrero in the general election in San Diego, CA; there is an Alejandro Guerrero listed as dying 5 years earlier.[7] It is not clear whether the two are the same person, or whether the death reports are accurate, and poll book records do not appear to have been investigated to determine whether the record of voting represented an impersonated signature or a clerical error.
8. 2012: According to the North Carolina State Board of Elections, one allegation of impersonation fraud in 2012 was sufficiently credible to refer to the local district attorney.[8] It is not clear whether the alleged fraud was in-person, or if follow-up established whether fraud did or did not likely occur.
9. June 2011: Hazel Brionne Woodard apparently arranged for her son Mark James Jr. to vote at the polls in the name of his father, Mark James Sr., in the municipal runoff elections in Tarrant County, TX.[9]
10. Nov. 2010: Four ballots may have been cast in the general election in South Carolina in the name of voters who had previously died (Ed Louis Johnson, Elbert R. Thompson, Ruth Middleton, and James L. Warnock); election and law enforcement officials had insufficient information to come to a final conclusion, including two pollbook pages that were unavailable. (Law enforcement agents believe that the ballot of Elbert R. Thompson may have been confused with that of his son, Elbert Thompson.) Another 203 allegations of deceased voters in the same election were revealed to be either clerical error or coincidence.[10]
11. May 2009: Lorenzo Antonio Almanza, Jr., after voting himself, apparently cast a ballot at the polls in the

name of his incarcerated brother, Orlando Almanza, in the 2009 election for the Progreso Independent School District Board, TX. (His mother, Reyna Almanza, vouched for him, and was separately convicted.) [11]

12. Nov. 2008: A vote was apparently cast at the polls in the name of Forrest Downie in the general election in San Diego, CA; there is a Forrest Downie listed as dying 3 years earlier.[12] It is not clear whether the two are the same person, or whether the death reports are accurate, and poll book records do not appear to have been investigated to determine whether the record of voting represented an impersonated signature or a clerical error.
13. Nov. 2008: A vote was apparently cast at the polls in the name of Scott Hagloch in the general election in San Diego, CA; there is a Scott Hagloch listed as dying 2 years earlier.[13] It is not clear whether the two are the same person, or whether the death reports are accurate, and poll book records do not appear to have been investigated to determine whether the record of voting represented an impersonated signature or a clerical error.
14. Mar. 2008: Jack Carol Crowder III allegedly impersonated his father (Jack Carol Crowder), using his father's voter registration card at the polls in the March 2008 presidential primary election in Baytown, TX.[14]
15. Aug. 2007: A vote was apparently cast at the polls in the statewide primary in Hattiesburg, MS, in the name of James E. Barnes, who died in 2006. This may (or may not) have been the result of clerical error confusing the man with his son, James W. Barnes; it is not clear whether the pollbooks were reviewed to determine whether fraud or clerical error was the cause.[15]
16. Aug. 2007: A vote was apparently cast at the polls in the statewide primary in Hattiesburg, MS, in the name of Stanley Dwayne Echols, who was at the hospital and did not vote.[16] It is not clear whether poll book records were investigated to determine whether the record of voting represented an impersonated signature or a clerical error.
17. June 2007: The two contending city council candidates in a municipal runoff election in Hoboken, NJ, both reported instances in the election in which someone went to the polls and found out that someone else had voted in their place.[17] It is not clear how many instances there were, or how the candidates learned of them. It is also not clear whether poll book records were investigated to determine whether the records of voting represented impersonated signatures or clerical errors.
18. 2007: A vote was apparently cast at the polls in a municipal budget referendum in Stonington, CT, in the name of Jane M. Drury, who died in 2000.[18] It is not clear whether poll book records were investigated to determine whether the record of voting represented an impersonated signature or a clerical error.
19. Nov. 2004: Rosalie B. Simpson died in August 2004, but a vote was apparently recorded at the polls in her name in the general election in Seattle, WA.[19] It is not clear whether poll book records were investigated to determine whether the record of voting represented an impersonated signature or a clerical error.
20. Nov. 2004: Frank Sanchez, in Albuquerque, NM, was told that someone had signed on the line for his name in the pollbook during the general election.[20] It is not clear whether poll book records were investigated to determine whether the record of voting represented an impersonated signature or a clerical error.

21. Nov. 2004: Someone apparently signed on the pollbook line for Rose-Mary G. McGee, in Albuquerque, NM, during the general election.[21]
22. Nov. 2004: Dwight Adkins, in Albuquerque, NM, was told that someone had signed on the line for his name in the pollbook during the general election.[22] It is not clear whether poll book records were investigated to determine whether the record of voting represented an impersonated signature or a clerical error.
23. Nov. 2004: Three people at the polls in Westchester County, NY, were given provisional ballots (in New York, “affidavit ballots”) in the general election because someone had allegedly signed the poll books in their place.[23] It is not clear whether poll book records were investigated to determine whether the records of voting represented impersonated signatures or clerical errors.
24. Nov. 2004: A vote was apparently cast at the polls in the general election in Milwaukee, WI, in the name of an individual who had died several years earlier.[24] It is not clear whether poll book records were investigated to determine whether the records of voting represented impersonated signatures or clerical errors.
25. 2004: According to the North Carolina State Board of Elections, one allegation of impersonation fraud in 2004 was sufficiently credible to refer to the local district attorney. [25] It is not clear whether the alleged fraud was in-person, or if follow-up established whether fraud did or did not likely occur.
26. Jan. 2004: Mark Lacasse apparently voted at the polls in the presidential primary in Londonderry, NH, in the name of his father, who was away on business at the time. [26]
27. Nov. 2002: Shasta Nicole Crayton apparently voted in her sister’s name at the polls in the general election in Dadeville, AL.[27]
28. In several municipal, primary, and general elections in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, and 2011, votes were cast in-person in Philadelphia, PA, by an individual named Joseph Cheeseboro and by an individual named Joseph J. Cheeseborough. There is apparently some doubt about where one or both names represent real identities.[28]
29. In elections from October 2008 through June 2011, 44 individuals with names, dates of birth, and Social Security numbers matching the information of individuals listed as incarcerated were recorded as having cast ballots in person in Michigan.[29] It is not clear whether records were further investigated to determine whether the matches represent fraudulent votes or clerical errors in either the incarceration records or the voting records.
30. In elections from October 2008 through June 2011, 145 individuals with names, dates of birth, and addresses matching the information of individuals listed as deceased were recorded as having cast ballots in person in Michigan.[30] It is not clear whether records were further investigated to determine whether the matches represent fraudulent votes or clerical errors in either the death records or the voting records.
31. According to Texas Director of Elections Keith Ingram, the names, birth dates, and Social Security numbers of four “recent” voters allegedly matched the corresponding information on earlier death certificates, indicating that the votes were cast after the individuals’ deaths. It is not clear at which elections these votes were cast or how many, if any, of these votes were cast at the polls (rather than

elections these votes were cast, or how many, if any, of these votes were cast at the polls (rather than absentee). It is also not clear whether poll book records were investigated to determine whether the record of voting represented an impersonated signature or a clerical error.[31]

Credible allegations of impersonation at the polls since 2000 that would not likely be prevented by a rule requiring ID at the polls, or attempted impersonation at the polls since 2000 that was actually prevented without a strict ID requirement

(Note: these allegations do not include other forms of fraud not prevented by a requirement to show ID at the polls, including absentee ballot fraud, vote buying, vote coercion, fraud in the tallying process, voter registration fraud, double voting, voting by nonresidents, voting by noncitizens, voting by persons disenfranchised by conviction, or fraud in the petitioning process.)

1. Nov. 2012: Linda Earlette Wells apparently voted at the polls in the general election in Germantown, MD, in the name of her mother (Beatrice Moore Wells), who had died in June 2011. She apparently used her mother's ID to cast the ballot.[32] It is not clear how a law requiring voters to show ID to pollworkers at the polls could stop a criminal from using a fraudulent driver's license to cast invalid ballots.
2. Nov. 2012: A vote was apparently cast at the polls in the name of Caitlin A. Legacki in the general election; Legacki was in Missouri at the time. However, in 2012, New Hampshire had a requirement that voters show photo ID at the polls; officials believe that either someone showed a fraudulent ID in Legacki's name or (according to them, more likely) that a clerical error incorrectly listed Legacki as voting.[33]
3. Nov. 2010 (and Nov. 2008): Ortencia Segura-Segura apparently voted at the polls in the name of Marisela Reyna in the general elections in Reno, NV, using a fraudulently procured Nevada driver's license.[34] It is not clear how a law requiring voters to show ID to pollworkers at the polls could stop a criminal from using a fraudulent driver's license to cast invalid ballots.
4. Mar. 2010: Delores McMillian and her mother were both election officials in Dallas. During the primary election, McMillian used one other voter's registration number to try to cast a ballot in her name. (Her mother may have used more, but died during the course of the investigation.) A fellow election worker apparently blocked the attempt.[35] It is not clear how a law requiring voters to show ID to pollworkers at the polls could stop a criminal pollworker from casting invalid ballots.
5. Nov. 2008 (and others): Mary Ann Comparin used a fake driver's license in the name of her long-dead sister, Norma Gerrish Collins, to vote in her sister's name in the 2008 general election in Bexar County, TX. [36] It is not clear how a law requiring voters to show ID to pollworkers at the polls could stop a criminal from using a fraudulent driver's license to cast invalid ballots.
6. Nov. 2008: Ricardo Lopez-Munguia apparently voted (whether absentee or in person is not clear) in the name of Gustavo Carranza-Madrigal in the general election in Escondido, CA. Lopez-Munguia possessed a fraudulent California driver's license.[37] It is not clear how a law requiring voters to show ID to pollworkers at the polls could stop a criminal from using a fraudulent driver's license to cast invalid

pollworkers at the polls could stop a criminal from using a fraudulent driver's license to cast invalid ballots.

7. May 2008: Andrea Peña was apparently recruited by mayor Omar Vela to vote in the school board election in Progreso, TX; Peña was apparently given someone else's voter registration card and told that pollworkers would make sure there were no problems. An election judge (more usually known as a pollworker) actually cast Peña's ballot for her.[38] It is not clear how a law requiring voters to show ID to pollworkers at the polls could stop a criminal from conspiring with pollworkers to cast invalid ballots.
8. May 2008: in the same Progreso school board election, Jessica Rangel claimed that Guadalupe Vela Sr. tried to convince Rangel to recruit a friend to vote with someone else's voter registration card, and claimed that "they had people that worked the election on their side." Rangel apparently refused.[39] It is not clear how a law requiring voters to show ID to pollworkers at the polls could stop a criminal from conspiring with pollworkers to cast invalid ballots.
9. Aug. 2007: Vancy Voorhies, a pollworker in Davidson County, TN, apparently voted at the polls in the mayoral election; at her ill elderly cousin's request, she signed her cousin's name in the pollbook (with her own initials to indicate the permission), asked her cousin how she preferred to vote, and cast the ballot accordingly.[40] It is not clear how a law requiring voters to show ID to pollworkers at the polls could stop a misguided pollworker from casting invalid ballots.
10. June 2007: A homeless man was apparently paid \$10 to use the name of Kevin Logan to vote in a city council runoff race in Hoboken, NJ. After a challenge by a local resident, the effort failed. [41]
11. Sept. 2005: Memphis, TN, pollworkers Verline Mayo, Gertrude Otteridge, and Mary McClatcher apparently cast at least three votes at the polls in the names of others, including two in the names of dead voters, in a special election for a state Senate seat.[42] It is not clear how a law requiring voters to show ID to pollworkers at the polls could stop a criminal pollworker from casting invalid ballots.
12. May 2005: Macon, MS, resident Kendrick Slaughter testified that he saw Ike Brown, chairman of the Noxubee County Democratic Executive Committee, urging Bridgette Brown to "go in [to the precinct pollsite] and vote, to use any name, and that no one was going to say anything." It is not clear whether Bridgette Brown did cast a vote at the polls in the name of another, but it is clear that pollworkers under Ike Brown's direction stood ready to commit or facilitate other forms of voter fraud.[43] It is not clear how a law requiring voters to show ID to pollworkers at the polls could stop a criminal from conspiring with pollworkers to cast invalid ballots.
13. Nov. 2000: A vote was cast in the general election in Miami, FL, in the name of Andre Alismé, who had died in 1997. The voter apparently used either a passport or driver's license and a voter registration card in Alismé's name.[44]

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