

TRY AND STOP US

STATE REPORT
IOWA · OCTOBER 2026

THE QUIET PURGE

IOWA REPUBLICANS ARE DECIDING WHO GETS TO VOTE — WHILE ALMOST NOBODY IS WATCHING.

For nearly a decade they've cut the early-voting calendar, flagged thousands of citizens as suspects at the polls, and shipped Iowans' private records to Trump's DOJ — all to shrink the electorate.

2,176
IOWANS FLAGGED AS SUSPECT "NONCITIZEN" VOTERS IN 2024

40→20
EARLY-VOTING DAYS, CUT NEARLY IN HALF

88%
OF THOSE FLAGGED WERE IN FACT ELIGIBLE CITIZENS

THE FRAME

THEY CAN'T WIN A FAIR FIGHT, SO THEY ARE GOING AFTER THE VOTER ROLLS.

Iowa Republicans have held control of the levers of state government for nearly a decade now, and have spent every day since they took power shrinking the electorate and making voting harder. First, they cut early voting almost in half, closed the polls an hour earlier, and decided to toss all mailed ballots arriving even a minute late. Then, two weeks before the 2024 election, the state's Republican Secretary of State ordered auditors in all 99 counties to challenge the ballots of thousands of registered Iowans he called potential noncitizens, keeping the list secret even from the people on it, even though nearly nine in ten of them were eligible citizens. They doubled down, writing noncitizen voter challenges into permanent law. This year, GOP state election officials started running every registered Iowa voter through a federal immigration database. The truth is, Iowa Republicans know they can't win a fair fight, so they are going after the voter rolls and making it harder to vote in order to shrink the electorate.

KEY FINDINGS

FOUR WAYS THE PURGE WORKS.

01

Iowa Republicans keep moving the deadlines in on voters.

Early voting is down from 40 days to 20 since Republicans took full control of state government, polls close an hour earlier, and a ballot that reaches the county auditor at 8:01 p.m. on Election Day is thrown out. An estimated 6,500 Iowa ballots counted in 2020 would have been thrown out under the rules dictating the 2026 midterm elections.

02

Iowa Republicans told poll workers to treat 2,176 of their neighbors as suspects.

Two weeks out from the 2024 election, Secretary of State Paul Pate pulled a list off driver's license records going back 12 years, ordered those Iowans' ballots challenged, and would not release the names to anyone who might have helped them. His own review later confirmed 277 of them were noncitizens. The other 1,899 were citizens made to prove it in front of their neighbors.

03

Iowa Republicans turned that stunt into permanent law.

A 2025 GOP law lets any poll worker challenge any Iowan's citizenship at the polls. A 2026 GOP law runs every registered voter through a federal immigration database every year and cancels the registration of anyone who does not produce proof within 90 days. This November is the first general election run under it.

04

Iowa Republicans handed Iowans' private records to Trump's Justice Department.

In May, Secretary Pate turned over driver's license and Social Security numbers to Trump's DOJ. While dozens of other states refused, Iowa gave up its voter files without a fight.

· TIMELINE

A DECADE, STEP BY STEP.

2017

Republicans won full control of state government and immediately started taking voting days off the calendar.

In their first year holding the governor's office and both chambers, Republicans passed Iowa's voter ID law and cut early voting from 40 days to 29. Iowa was one of dozens of GOP-led states that have added nearly 100 restrictive voting laws since the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act.

MARCH 2021

Republicans punished a record turnout election with Senate File 413.

Months after more Iowans voted than ever before, Governor Reynolds signed a bill cutting early voting from 29 days to 20, closing the polls an hour earlier at 8 p.m., and requiring mailed ballots to be in the auditor's hands before those polls close. A ballot postmarked the day before Election Day used to count if it arrived by the following Monday. Democrats calculated that about 6,500 ballots counted in 2020 would have been thrown out under the new rule. The same law moved the deadline to request a mailed ballot to 15 days out, allowed satellite early voting sites only if voters petitioned for them, and narrowed who may return someone else's ballot, part of a national campaign against voter assistance. County auditors who stray from the secretary of state's guidance now risk $10,000 fines.

FEBRUARY AND MARCH 2023

Secretary Pate called the best voter roll tool in the country "a godsend," then threw it away.

In February he told NPR that the bipartisan data cooperative states use to catch voters who have died or moved was "a godsend." Weeks later, after Trump attacked the program and other Republican secretaries of state bailed out, Secretary Pate announced that Iowa was leaving too.

LATE 2024

Secretary Pate ordered 2,176 so-called noncitizen voters challenged at the polls, with voting already underway.

He directed county auditors to challenge the ballots of everyone on a list of people who had told the Department of Transportation they were not citizens at some point in the previous 12 years. Plenty of them had naturalized since, and the order forced all of them onto provisional ballots. His office refused to release the names, even to the Iowans on the list, so no one could help them clear it up before Election Day. Six weeks after acting on the list, Iowa's Republican election officials filed suit against the Department of Homeland Security for access to the federal immigration database holding the records Secretary Pate said he needed to know whether those 2,176 Iowans were eligible.

MARCH 2025

Secretary Pate's own audit showed he was wrong about nearly nine out of ten so-called noncitizen voters.

With database access granted by the Trump administration, his office confirmed that 277 of the 2,176 were not citizens (about one in eight) and reported that 35 noncitizen ballots were counted statewide in 2024. To find those 35 ballots, Republicans put 1,899 eligible Iowans through a citizenship challenge at the polls.

JUNE 2025

Governor Reynolds signed the noncitizen voter stunt into permanent law.

A 2025 GOP Iowa law now lets a poll worker challenge any voter's citizenship, forcing a provisional ballot if the challenge stands, and creates an "unconfirmed" registration status for Iowans the state cannot match to a record.

DECEMBER 1, 2025

Iowa Republicans gained access to federal immigration data, in exchange for Iowans' driver's license data.

In December, Iowa officials announced a settlement with Trump's Homeland Security Department giving the state 20 years of access to a federal immigration database in exchange for handing Iowa driver's license data to the federal government.

FEBRUARY 2026

Secretary Pate settled with the voters he targeted in 2024, conceding at least 88% were eligible all along.

After admitting that the vast majority of ballots he challenged in 2024 were eligible, Iowa's GOP Secretary of State settled with voters, agreeing not to use the 2024 list again for challenges, removals, or any other list maintenance. As part of the settlement, he also agreed not to issue any future challenge list within 90 days of an election based on driver's license records alone. The ACLU of Iowa called it a safeguard against the eleventh-hour chaos of 2024.

MAY 2026

Secretary Pate handed over Trump's Justice Department Iowa's voter records.

In May, Secretary Pate and Attorney General Bird turned over Iowa voter records, including driver's license and Social Security numbers, to Trump's DOJ. While dozens of other states successfully fought to keep voters' data out of the hands of the federal government, Iowa Republicans immediately caved.

MAY AND JUNE 2026

Republicans passed three more voter restrictions in a single session.

One law (Senate File 2218) requires the state to run every registered voter through the federal immigration database every year, new registrants every month, and to cancel any registration not cleared within 90 days of a notice. Another (House File 2501) ended the practice that let a registered Iowan without an ID have a neighbor vouch for them at the polls. Still another law (Senate File 140) bans satellite early voting sites on school property when a school measure is on the ballot.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT IS UP TO US

IOWA'S ELECTIONS WORK — AND THE PURGE NOW RUNS ITSELF.

Iowa's Elections Work, and the Republicans Running Them Keep Admitting It

Secretary Pate called the bipartisan voter roll cooperative "a godsend" before he walked Iowa out of it. He conceded that at least 88% of the Iowans he flagged in 2024 were citizens, and he now says he hopes never to repeat it. His own audit turned up 35 noncitizen ballots statewide.

The Purge Runs Itself Now

There is no directive to sue over this time and no secret list to leak. The checks run on a schedule written into state law, the cancellations land 90 days after a notice an Iowan may never open, and the state left the cooperative that used to catch the errors. Pile on a mail deadline built on the same unproven fraud claims Republicans use everywhere to make voting by mail harder. Iowa has an open governor's race, an open Senate seat and a House seat decided by fewer than 800 votes last cycle, and this year the margin in all three runs through quiet cancellations and ballots the mail delivers an hour late.

· WHAT IOWA VOTERS NEED TO KNOW

HOW TO VOTE IN IOWA

Voters pick our leaders, not the other way around. Iowa Republicans have spent a decade flipping that, shrinking the calendar, building a challenge system on bad data, and shipping Iowans' private records to Trump's Justice Department. They can't win a fair fight, so they are trying to hold onto power by shrinking the electorate, rigging the game at your expense while Iowa families pay more at the grocery store and Iowa farmers eat the cost of Trump's tariffs. Their plan only works if a moved deadline, a canceled registration or a slow mail truck hands them your vote. They are counting on you to stay home. Don't give it to them. Here's what every Iowan needs to know:

OCT 19
PRE-REGISTER & MAIL REQUEST

OCT 14–NOV 2
EARLY VOTING

NOV 3
ELECTION DAY · 7A–8P

1. **Check your registration today, and pre-register by Monday, October 19.** Look yourself up at sos.iowa.gov, because the state is now running every voter against a federal database and canceling the ones it cannot match. Miss the deadline and you can still register at an early voting site or at your polling place on Election Day with proof of who you are and where you live.

2. **Vote early and in person, October 14 through November 2.** Early voting runs at your county auditor's office and at satellite sites, and it takes the mail, the deadlines and the guesswork out of it entirely.

3. **If you vote by mail, request your ballot by 5 p.m. October 19 and send it back the day you get it.** It must reach your county auditor by 8 p.m. on November 3. A postmark will not save it. If there is any doubt, hand it to the auditor's office yourself.

4. **Bring your photo ID.** Polls are open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on November 3, and as of this year a neighbor can no longer vouch for an Iowan who shows up without an ID. Find your precinct at sos.iowa.gov.

5. **If anyone challenges you, do not walk away.** Ask for a provisional ballot, then bring your ID or proof of citizenship to your county auditor by the canvass the Monday after the election, and your vote counts the same as everyone else's.

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DON’T GIVE IT TO THEM.

Try And Stop Us is an organization fighting to defend elections in 2026 and beyond. As Donald Trump and his allies work to rig the game and sow distrust in our elections because they can’t win a fair fight, Try And Stop Us moves quickly to amplify the work of organizers and local leaders — helping their voices reach further, faster, as one unified story. For more information, please reach out to info@tryandstopus.org.

TRYANDSTOPUS.ORG

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