

The Faces of the SAVE Act: Voter Stories

The sampling of stories below represents a mere fraction of the tens of thousands of voters that VoteRiders has assisted with obtaining vital documents as part of their journey to get the ID they need to vote.

If the SAVE Act is enacted, these voters and millions more would be unable to register or stay registered to vote without extensive help like that offered by VoteRiders. Without support, they likely would not have been able to overcome the document costs, transportation struggles, and legal hurdles that are often associated with securing proof of citizenship documents.



JULIE, OKLAHOMA — Julie was unable to prove her identity because her birth certificate did not match her current legal name, and she did not have a copy of her marriage license from 1984. She was told to contact the Oklahoma County Clerk's Office to track the license down, but no one there could locate it. Then Julie became gravely ill, had to be hospitalized, and lost half her liver due to complications during surgery.

When Julie came to VoteRiders for help, a volunteer contacted the Oklahoma County Clerk's Office and was told the marriage license did not exist. Finally, after VoteRiders escalated the issue to Julie's Oklahoma state representative, her marriage license was finally uncovered. As a result, it took Julie five years to finally get a state ID with her current legal name on it.



DENNIS, WISCONSIN — Dennis is a US Marine veteran who moved to Wisconsin to care for his ailing parents. He did not have his birth certificate, which was required as part of the process to obtain the photo ID he needed to vote in Wisconsin.

It took months of effort by a volunteer lawyer working with VoteRiders to track down his birth records from Arkansas. When they finally tracked it down, it turned out that his name was misspelled. The French Creole midwife who attended Dennis' birth had written his name as "Denet" on his birth certificate instead of Dennis.



MILDRED, VIRGINIA — Mildred was born in North Carolina in 1960, but never received an official birth certificate. She did not have the funds to apply for a delayed birth certificate until VoteRiders provided assistance.

She initially submitted her marriage license, divorce decree, high school records, and her child's birth certificate to the Superior Court. Two weeks later, she was told her application had been denied because she did not have enough supporting documents. She was given three options: 1) Provide an affidavit of "personal knowledge," which wasn't possible because both of her parents had passed away; 2) apply through the court system which was

likely to take a long time or 3) Request a "Numident Record" from the Social Security Administration (SSA) to prove that she had a Social Security number/card. For timing and cost reasons, Mildred opted to try to prove her identity through her SSA record. Originally estimated to take 4 to 6 weeks, Mildred's wait was delayed due to slower processing during the holiday season. Once she received her social security record she was finally able to apply for her delayed birth certificate, a process which added an additional month.



ROGER AND SANDRA, VIRGINIA — Sandra and her family all lost their birth certificates in a flood that hit their home in Virginia. On top of the challenges of becoming homeless, they struggled to replace their birth certificates without ID – but couldn't get an ID without a birth certificate.

VoteRiders was able to help Sandra and everyone in her family navigate the complex process and cover all of the costs of obtaining their much needed documents.



PRENTISS, NORTH CAROLINA — Prentiss had recently moved to North Carolina but was born in Ohio and did not have a copy of his birth certificate. VoteRiders helped Prentiss order a copy of his birth certificate from Ohio online and covered the cost. But, when it finally arrived after several weeks, it wasn't even his—it belonged to someone else.

VoteRiders contacted the Ohio Vital Records Office, returned the incorrect birth certificate, and requested Prentiss' birth certificate a second time. Five weeks passed. Finally, through a contact at the Ohio Vital Records Office VoteRiders was able to get Ohio to issue the correct birth certificate. The entire process took over two months.



LINDA, INDIANA — was told she couldn't get a state ID until she submitted multiple marriage out of state licenses and divorce decrees — one dating back fifty years. Like so many other Americans who change their name at the time of marriage, Linda found herself stuck in a maze of bureaucracy and paperwork as she attempted to track down a paper trail of documents to prove her current last name. "As far as the state is concerned, if you're a female who has been married and divorced and you don't take back the name that matches your birth certificate, you have to keep certified copies of all this information to prove how you got the name that you have. I thought to myself, how many other women are in this same situation? I bet it's a lot."

Linda is a wheelchair user and homebound. VoteRiders was able to help track down all of the paperwork she needed, pay for certified copies and provide accessible transportation for Linda to apply for her ID.



JEMMIE, INDIANA — Jemmie applied for a copy of her Ohio birth certificate when she moved from Tennessee to Indiana and needed to update her ID. When the birth certificate arrived, Jemmie was shocked to discover that her first and middle names were spelled differently, and her last name listed was not the one she'd used her entire life. This also meant her birth certificate conflicted with her Social Security card and previous state IDs.

Jemmie first sought help through a Legal Aid organization in Indiana but they did not have the resources to help. VoteRiders was able to connect her with a volunteer attorney who drafted the affidavit Jemmie had to file in order to request the name on her birth certificate be changed. VoteRiders also paid for Jemmie to get the affidavit notarized. A month after the affidavit was filed, her birth certificate was finally corrected and she was able to order a new copy of it.



ERIC, NORTH CAROLINA — Helping Eric get a copy of his birth certificate took over a year. Eric lived in North Carolina but was born in New York. He had been raised by his grandparents who had a different last name to his mother. He didn't know if he had been legally adopted or if his name had been legally changed and his birth certificate amended.

His school and other records in New York had his mother's last name, but his initial application for a birth certificate in that name was rejected. A second application for a birth certificate using his grandparent's last name was also rejected. VoteRiders originally arranged for a pro bono lawyer in New York to assist Eric, but his case got delayed when the attorney changed firms and his file had to be transferred. Finally, a VoteRiders staff

member came up with one last strategy, which involved arranging for Eric to receive some government mail in his current name. She then submitted the mail with the application for an amended birth certificate and after another month of waiting his birth certificate was finally issued.