

The SAVE Act, Three Women's Stories by "Treya"

These stories first appeared in the March 2026 Edition of the League of Women Voters of the Mother Lode's Voter Newsletter.

Although the following stories are fictitious, they are based on conversations with three real women in our Mother Lode area who talked about how the SAVE Act would affect them if it came to pass. These women's stories are like those of thousands of women across the United States.

SAVE ACT STORY 1

My mom remarried twice while I was growing up. My name is Marie Louise, at least that is the name that has been mine and only mine for my whole life. My birth name, Marie Louise Baker, is not my maiden name because I asked to have my name changed to match my stepdad's name when I was 8 years old and attending school. I was then Marie Louise Gerber. I married after I joined the army, and then changed my name as my fiancé requested. My name is now Marie Louise Vanderkolk.

Recently, I moved from Modesto, where I raised my children, back to Idaho, where I grew up, and I went online to reregister to vote. Now that the SAVE Act (one of the new laws) has been passed, I discovered that I must prove my citizenship, in person, to register to vote. I am a veteran!!! I have voted in every election since I was 18 years old!

Why? My passport has the name Marie Louise Gerber. My driver's license and Social Security card have Marie Louise Vanderkolk. After waiting in line at the county recorder's office to register, I am told that I need a bunch of documents to prove that I am the person on that birth certificate. I now need copies of:

My birth certificate	\$38
Name change to maiden name at 8 yrs of age	\$50
Marriage license with maiden name	\$19

So, this presents several hurdles for me: time, money, and patience.... Also, I am offended! I am a United States veteran and have voted all my life. This is humiliating and, to say the least, quite inconvenient.

I ask myself if my vote matters that much. Do my representatives know that they have done this to me and all the women like me? Why have they turned against me? I changed my name when I married, like a woman is supposed to do. And, when I was young, I changed my name because I wanted to belong in my new family as any child would.

WHY is this happening to me now? Why are lawmakers blind to a married woman's situation?

SAVE Act STORY 2

I have only a first and middle name that are true to me. I can rely on them to accompany me for all my days. But my last name has had many faces. Now in my seventh decade, I must find a way to prove I am me and that I am a citizen of the USA because my last name is not the name on my birth certificate.

Let me explain: Why now you may wonder? Have my representatives in Congress left me out on purpose, have forgotten I exist, or don't want a senior citizen like me to vote? Or have they just been negligent? NO ... it is because there is now a misguided effort to safeguard our voting rolls from illegals. I say "misguided" because the new law casts such a wide net that this "reform" is creating disinterest in voting by eligible citizens.

I was born in New Jersey, and voted for the first time there. My birth name was Marie Louise Merchant. When I married, I became Marie Louise White, and after my husband passed away, I remarried, and my name is now Marie Louise Dixon. I voted in my first election when I was 25. Fortunately, that was after women first got the vote in the United States in 1920. I raised eight children in Ohio and worked as an executive secretary for the mayor of Springfield before I recently moved to Nevada to help care for my new husband's dying brother.

I am trying to register to vote in my new state, and yesterday I was told that in order to register in Nevada, I must now prove that I am a citizen of the USA. I cannot use my driver's license, but must obtain a copy of my birth certificate, my first marriage license, and my second marriage license, and then drive fifty miles to an office with limited hours and present all these documents to register to vote. At my age, driving fifty miles round-trip in one day to wait and present these documents is a formidable obstacle. Also, obtaining copies of all these documents is an inconvenience, to say the least. The fees are not extreme, but added up are between \$100 and \$200. Additionally, there is the time involved, and I also must produce an ID in order to obtain those documents. I discovered that neither my passport nor my Social Security card is sufficient because they both are in my second married name. I am offended that I must now prove I am an American citizen, and bewildered to say the least that after voting in 12 Presidential elections, I now must prove I am an eligible voter. Maybe my vote doesn't really matter. It is unlikely that I will complete this obstacle course. Marie Louise will now be silenced. Also, I feel betrayed by our custom to change names when married. I advise every woman getting married NOT TO DO SO!

My first two names are all I have ... The rest of my name has betrayed me.

SAVE ACT Story 3

Every woman who changed her name when she married must again fight for her identity...to be herself and exercise her right as a United States citizen to make her voice heard.

It now seems that a woman should just keep her maiden name. Forget tradition or risk losing your voice in our democratic process.

This is my predicament. As a married woman, moving to a new place, I must now jump through multiple hoops to register to vote in 2026. Never has this even entered my frame of reference before moving or taking on my husband's name until now, and I am not unusual.

I have recently remarried and moved, and now I must prove that I am a US citizen. I have never lived anywhere but in this country. I have a passport, and I was told that's what I need ...but it has expired. So now I must dig deeper into my background. I need a birth certificate to prove I was born in the USA, and the name on my driver's license doesn't match the name on my birth certificate, nor does the name on my marriage license match my birth certificate. I was told after waiting some time at the county clerk's office that I also must produce not only my birth certificate, but also my marriage license. And now that I've remarried, I also must provide a copy of my second marriage license. So, to prove I am the same person who has voted in the past 22 elections, I have a lot of work to do.

All of this requires contacting various offices in different parts of the country. This will take submitting my ID electronically, sending money, waiting for documents, assembling documents, and reappearing at the county clerk's office, where I will be given the privilege to re-register to vote. This is a privilege I was given when I was first old enough to vote (at 18) in this country, and a right I have exercised multiple times as an adult. Re-registering has always been a simple process involving only one picture ID, and sometimes a Social Security card.

I'm not so sure my one vote is worth all this trouble. Actually, now that I think about it, maybe that's the point of this new law. The stated aim of the law is to secure our voting process, ensure only citizens are voting in our national elections, and purge our voting rolls of non-citizens. I know that illegal aliens are not allowed to vote, as the current law states. Enforcing current law is all that is needed, so I am mystified. Why more bureaucratic nonsense? Why is this law written in such a way that I, a wife and mother, must now jump over all of these new hurdles to exercise my right to vote? Isn't my vote as important as that of any other US citizen?