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Virginia Admitted to Wrongfully Removing 3,400 Voters. Can It Recover Ahead of Pivotal Elections?

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Since announcing the improper removal of nearly 3,400 eligible voters from Virginia's voter rolls—[more than 10 times the initial estimate](#) Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin's administration acknowledged in early October—the administration on Friday said that it had completed restoring voting rights to those wrongfully removed.

But voting rights advocates say that the damage from the improper removals is essentially unmitigable at this point, with Virginia now just days away from one of the [most critical elections](#) in the state's recent history. Many warn that the confusion over voting status will undermine confidence in the democratic process, particularly among individuals who may be concerned that unintentional errors at the ballot could land them in prison.

"How can you figure out how many people will not vote because they're too afraid to go to the polls? There's no way to get that number," Joan Porte, president of the League of Women Voters of Virginia, told *Mother Jones*. Port also cited the inability to know with certainty how many people were receiving notifications that their rights had been restored in time for Election Day.

"It's a chilling effect on voting. It's a disenfranchisement that should never have been even considered. And it's just another sad piece of Virginia's already terrible history."

That history, in more recent years, includes strict voter ID guidelines for elections [that can literally come down to a single voter](#). Such close margins are expected in Virginia's elections next week, which are being viewed as a bellwether for the national political landscape. As my colleague Ari Berman [wrote](#), at stake is control over Virginia's legislature, where every member of the state House and

Senate is up for election. Critical issues ranging from abortion access to voting rights are also on the ballot.

"Virginia could well become Texas, Florida, or Ohio at the vanguard of undermining democracy," Daniel Squadron, co-founder of the States Project, told Berman.

Since Friday's new 3,4000 estimate was announced, Virginia Democrats have renewed [calls](#) for the Justice Department to investigate Youngkin's administration for possible violations of the Voting Rights Act.

Frustration is especially strong when it comes to Youngkin, who ran on a platform of protecting "[election integrity](#)." In 2022, Youngkin halted the automatic restoration of voting rights, a move that attracted accusations of facilitating voter suppression efforts. According to the Brennan Center, Virginia is the [only state that automatically strips](#) a person's right to vote once they have been convicted of a felony.

"The administration is still refusing to be transparent about how the error happened in the first place and how they're going to fix it," [Shawn Weneta told Axios](#). "Instead they've tried to divert responsibility off to local registrars and even tried to blame other previous administrations for the problem."