



## Eliminate Witness Signature Support [SB 1097](#)



**Executive Summary.** Eliminating the witness signature requirement for absentee voting will **increase participation, increase efficiency, and streamline voting.**

**Issue.** As a University of Virginia academic [testified](#) in a recent [case](#), the witness requirement “**makes it more difficult and burdensome to vote by mail**, especially for citizens who live alone—including the elderly, minorities, those with disabilities, those who live in rural communities, and low-income voters.”

**Witness signatures are not required in 39 states**  
-- National Coalition of State Legislatures

### **Discussion.**

- Not all Virginians can readily leave home to find a witness. [Almost 33% of Virginians over 65 live alone](#). [23.6%](#) of Virginians have a disability, 12.1% have serious mobility issues, and 4.1% are blind or have serious vision impairment. African American Virginians are [more likely](#) to live alone, have a disability, or lack transportation.
- The witness requirement itself is [not “especially effective in preventing voter fraud”](#). Witness signatures are [not verified](#) and can even be illegible.
- Absentee ballot fraud is **vanishingly rare**. “It is still [more likely for an American to be struck by lightning](#) than to commit mail voting fraud.”
- **States with no witness signature requirement and no voter signature matching** include [Connecticut](#), [Delaware](#), [Maryland](#), [New Mexico](#), [Vermont](#), [Wisconsin](#), and [Wyoming](#). Voters generally sign an oath under penalty of perjury.

### **Safeguards for mail voting in Virginia are extensive, including:**

- Voters who commit fraud during any part of the election process risk serious felony charges and permanent loss of voting rights.
- Every applicant provides their social security number and address when registering to vote.
- The voter must submit personally identifying information to receive a ballot.
- The ballot is sent to the voter’s address of record.
- Each ballot envelope has an individual bar code for tracking by the voter and the Department of Elections.
- When the ballot is returned, it is recorded in the voter registration system so the voter cannot vote again.

The witness requirement deters civic participation. SB 1097 will remove that barrier, supporting Virginia voters.

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