

PETER GIBSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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Dear Constituent

Thank you for your email about voter ID.

A secure electoral system is a vital component of a healthy democracy, and the public must have confidence that our elections are secure and fit for the 21st century. I am proud to support the Government's new Elections Bill, which modernises existing legislation to protect electoral regulations and tackle foreign influence in our elections.

I appreciate your concerns about Voter ID but introducing identification to vote was a Conservative Party manifesto commitment in 2019 on which I was elected. Asking voters to bring ID to their polling station is an important way of strengthening the confidence in our democracy and the Elections Bill will put such a requirement into law.

Voter ID is not new. Northern Ireland has required paper ID at polling stations since 1985, and photo ID since 2003 – introduced by the last Labour Government. It has proved to be effective at tackling fraud and has not curtailed election turnout.

Identification to vote has been backed by the Electoral Commission and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, which state that its absence is a security risk. At present, it is harder to take out a library book or collect a parcel at a post office than it is to vote in someone else's name.

Already 99% of those aged 18–29-year-olds along with 99% of people from ethnic minority background had a form of ID that would be accepted under the proposals, have a valid form of photo ID while even 98% of those aged over 70 possess one. In pilot schemes in 2018 and 2019, the overwhelming majority of people cast their vote without a problem and the success of the pilots proves that this is a reasonable and proportionate measure to take, and there was no notable adverse effect on turnout.

The Electoral Commission also stated that "*the experience of taking part in the pilot scheme appears to have had a positive impact on people's perception of the security of the polling station process, and on their confidence in it...Polling station staff were satisfied with how polling day went and were confident that they could manage the process of people showing voter identification at future elections.*"

Member of Parliament for Darlington

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Under the Government's proposals, anyone without an ID will be able to apply for a new free one – meaning that no voter will be disenfranchised.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to contact me and if I can ever be any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

Yours Sincerely
Peter Gibson

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