

What Do I Need to Vote? Bureaucratic Discretion and Discrimination by Local Election Officials

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Do street-level bureaucrats discriminate in the services they provide to constituents? We use a field experiment to measure differential information provision about voting by local election administrators in the United States. We contact over 7,000 election officials in 48 states who are responsible for providing information to voters and implementing voter ID laws. We find that officials provide different information to potential voters of different putative ethnicities. Emails sent from Latino aliases are significantly less likely to receive any response from local election officials than non-Latino white aliases and receive responses of lower quality. This raises concerns about the effect of voter ID laws on access to the franchise and about bias in the provision of services by local bureaucrats more generally.