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Subject: Study finds costs associated with voter IDs - By Krissah Thompson, Published: July 17 The Washington Post

Study finds costs associated with voter IDs

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By Krissah Thompson, Published: July 17 The Washington Post

New laws in 10 states requiring voters to show IDs could present serious challenges to voters without financial resources and transportation, according to a report released Wednesday.

The study by the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law, which opposes the new laws, found several obstacles that could keep voters from being able to cast ballots, including limited access to offices that issue the IDs required under the new measures.

"The advocates of these laws kept saying we're going to provide these IDs for free and that's going to eliminate all of the problems," said Keesha Gaskins, co-author of the report. "We found the ability to get documents isn't that simple. The documents are costly for many, many voters and there are serious transportation barriers for many voters. We just found really significant problems."

The study comes on the heels of closing arguments in a trial over Texas's new law, in which Justice Department lawyers argued that requiring photo IDs from voters would disenfranchise the elderly and minorities.

Republican state attorneys general defending the laws have said they prevent voter fraud and make the voting system more secure. The laws vary, but generally require registered voters to show a state-issued photo identification in order to cast a ballot.

"The Texas voter ID law does not disenfranchise voters," Texas state Attorney General Greg Abbott told reporters as the trial closed last week in Washington.

A federal three-judge panel is expected to decide the case by Labor Day.

Echoing the Justice Department's argument that the laws are burdensome, the Brennan Center report found nearly half a million eligible voters in the 10 states do not have access to a vehicle and live more than 10 miles from their nearest state ID-issuing office.

In some areas, the offices that issue IDs maintain limited business hours. Rural areas in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Texas are served by part-time ID offices. And in an

extreme example, the researchers found the office in Sauk City, Wis., is open only on the fifth Wednesday of any month. That would limit the office to being open just four days this year.

Voters who do not have their birth certificates or marriage licenses may have to pay additional costs because those documents are required to obtain a photo ID in some cases.

The report said birth certificates can cost between \$8 and \$25. Marriage licenses, required in some states for married women whose birth certificates include a maiden name, can cost between \$8 and \$20. "By comparison, the notorious poll tax — outlawed during the civil rights era — cost \$10.64 in current dollars," the report states.

In the Texas case, a judge on the panel suggested the law would force some people to travel more than 100 miles to get the documents required for a photo identification.

John Hughes, the state's attorney in the case, said Texans in rural areas are used to driving long distances. "People who want to vote already have an ID or can easily get it," he said.

Hans von Spakovsky, a senior legal fellow at the Heritage Foundation, said the argument that transportation and hidden costs should negate voter identification laws has not worked with courts in the past. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld Indiana's voter ID law in 2008, saying the costs associated with obtaining photo identification were not a sufficient barrier to invalidate the law.

"The application of the statute to the vast majority of Indiana voters is amply justified by the valid interest in protecting the integrity and reliability of the electoral process," wrote Justice John Paul Stevens, who argued the state law is a reasonable reaction to the threat of voter fraud.

Von Spakovsky said the "indirect costs" associated with obtaining a voter ID, including transportation, are no different "than having to get a ride to go and register to vote."