Utah Election Reforms that Win Public Trust

Written by Derek Monson & Ford Copple | February 2026

Key Takeaways

- Election reforms enacted in 2025 and being considered in 2026 have varying impacts on voter confidence in elections and legislator electability

- Policies that make it more difficult to cast a ballot by mail decrease voter confidence and legislator electability, while policies that require voters to prove they are voting legally increase voter confidence and legislator electability

- The path of good policy and good politics in election reform is clear: Use electronic verification methods to strengthen voter ID and proof-of-citizenship requirements

Executive Summary

As Utah lawmakers consider reforms that affect fundamental rights of self-government, such as voting, they should have data on voters' views of those reforms. For this purpose, Sutherland Institute commissioned Y² Analytics in 2025 to survey Utah voters' views on election policy reforms enacted in 2025 and those under consideration for 2026. The results can inform policymakers' decisions about election integrity, voting rights, and proper election administration.

Voter confidence in Utah elections and vote-by-mail (VBM) in 2025 was high. Compared to 2024, voter confidence in vote-by-mail increased in 2025, while confidence in elections overall decreased slightly. Most election reform measures enacted in 2025 increased voter confidence, with the exception of a requirement that ballots be mailed only to Utah voters who request them.

Among the newly proposed election policy reforms under consideration in 2026, requiring that mailed ballots be returned in person reduces voter confidence and legislators' electability, whereas requiring proof of citizenship to register to vote increases both.

In summary, Utah voters are less confident in elections and less willing to re-elect their legislators when the law burdens their right to cast their ballot by mail, and more confident and willing to re-elect their legislators when voters must prove they are voting legally. The data suggest that the path of good policy and good politics is to enact reforms that maintain ease of access to mail-in voting while strengthening measures like voter ID and proof of citizenship, through electronic rather than in-person ID verification.

Note: Percent totals in the charts used may not add to 100 due to rounding.

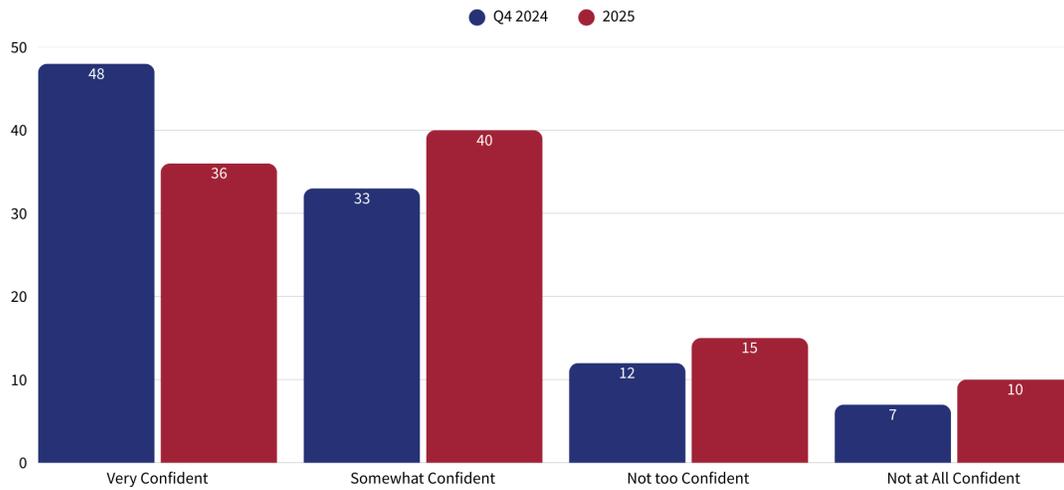# Utah voter confidence in elections, vote-by-mail

A valuable measure in election policy is net voter confidence, which is the proportion of voters who say they are confident in elections minus the proportion of voters who say they are not confident in elections. This metric is one measure of the extent to which voters believe election results to be legitimate – a necessity in representative government.

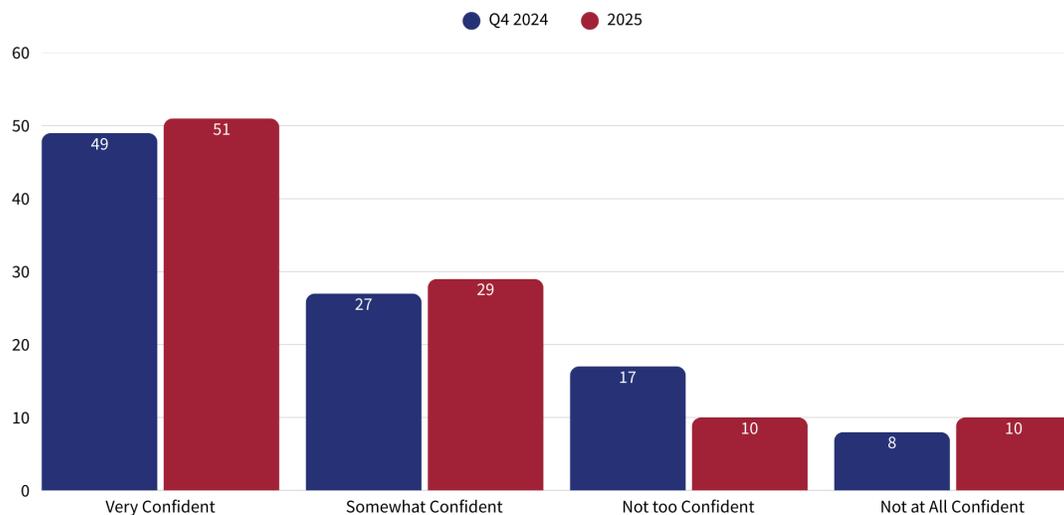For example, in 2025, about three-fourths of Utah voters expressed confidence in Utah's election process, compared to one-fourth who said they are not confident, for a net voter confidence of +51. That is a decrease of 9 points from the 2024 net voter confidence of +62, driven by a 12-point drop in the proportion of voters who are very confident in Utah elections.

By contrast, Utah's net voter confidence in VBM actually increased from +51 to +60 between 2024 and 2025, driven by a 7-point drop in the proportion of voters who are not too confident in VBM.

Utah voter confidence 2024 vs 2025

● Q4 2024   ● 2025

Confidence	Q4 2024	2025
Very Confident	48	36
Somewhat Confident	33	40
Not too Confident	12	15
Not at All Confident	7	10

Utah voter confidence in vote by mail 2024 vs 2025

● Q4 2024   ● 2025

Confidence	Q4 2024	2025
Very Confident	49	51
Somewhat Confident	27	29
Not too Confident	17	10
Not at All Confident	8	10

Impact of 2025 election reforms: Confidence and electability

H.B. 300 Amendments to Election Law, enacted in the 2025 legislative session, implemented a number of election policy reforms. The more notable reforms include:

• Requiring additional identification for mail-in ballots

• In-person voting only for those without ID

• Mailing ballots only to voters who request a mailed ballot

• Counting mail-in ballots only if they are received by Election Day

One valuable measure of the policy effect of election reforms is their impact on voter confidence. Overall, 52% of Utah voters 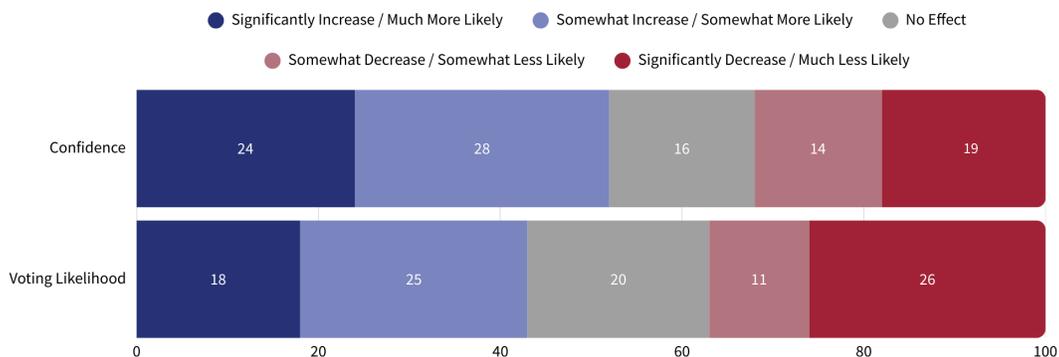reported that H.B. 300 reforms increased their confidence in elections, whereas 33% reported decreased confidence. This produces a voter confidence impact of +19.

To understand the political impact of these reforms, we can similarly measure legislator electability impact. For example, 53% of Utah voters said they would be more likely to vote to re-elect their legislators if they knew they voted in favor of H.B. 300, compared to 37% of voters who said they would be less likely to vote to re-elect them. This produces a legislator electability impact of +16.

The voter confidence impact and legislator electability impact of the individual reforms in H.B. 300 vary. Requiring additional ID for mail-in ballots and in-person only voting for those without ID have significantly positive impact on voter confidence and legislator electability. Mailing ballots only to voters who request them has a significantly negative impact on voter confidence and legislator electability, while counting mail-in ballots only if received by Election Day has a modestly negative impact on both measures.

2025 Reform	Voter Confidence Impact	Legislator Electability Impact
Requiring additional ID for mail-in ballots	+37	+15
In-person only voting for those w/out ID	+28	+16
Mailing ballots only to voters who request it	-15	-18
Counting mail-in ballots only if received by Election Day	-2	-8

Impact on confidence and electability H.B. 300

● Significantly Increase / Much More Likely   ● Somewhat Increase / Somewhat More Likely   ● No Effect
● Somewhat Decrease / Somewhat Less Likely   ● Significantly Decrease / Much Less Likely

	Significantly Increase	Somewhat Increase	No Effect	Somewhat Decrease	Significantly Decrease
Confidence	24	28	16	14	19
Voting Likelihood	18	25	20	11	26

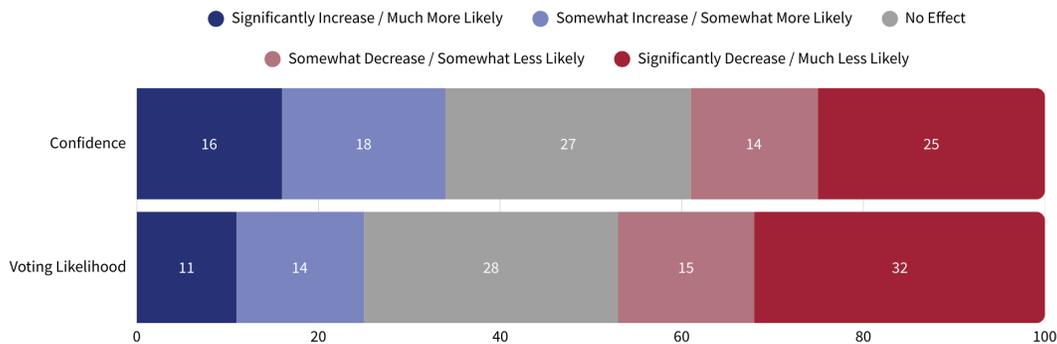# Impact of proposed 2026 reforms: Confidence and electability

Utah lawmakers are considering a number of additional election reforms in 2026. Two reforms included in the Sutherland/Y² Analytics survey were: (1) requiring mailed ballots to be returned in person (H.B. 479), and (2) requiring proof of citizenship to register to vote (S.B. 194). This allows us to evaluate their impact on voter confidence and legislator electability.
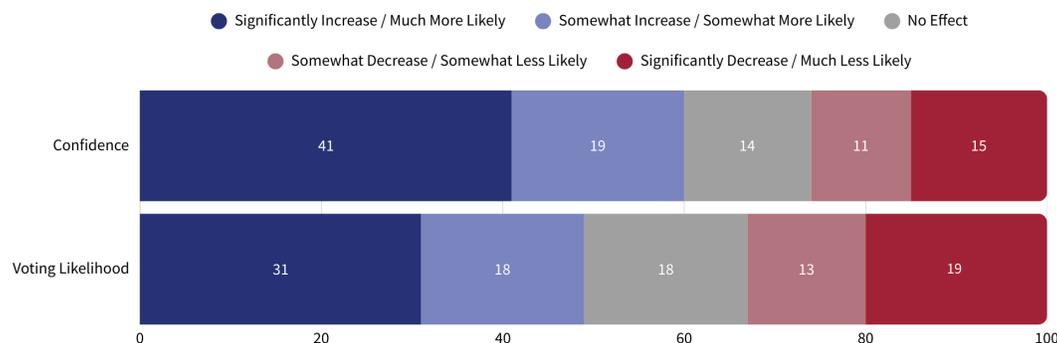
Requiring that ballots mailed to voters be cast in person has a modestly negative impact on voter confidence at -5, and a significantly negative impact on legislator electability at -22. On the other hand, requiring proof of citizenship to vote has a significantly positive impact on both voter confidence (+34) and legislator electability (+17).

2025 Reform	Voter Confidence Impact	Legislator Electability Impact
Requiring mailed ballots be cast in person	-5	-22
Requiring proof of citizenship to vote	+34	+17

Impact on confidence and electability requiring mailed ballots to be cast in person

● Significantly Increase / Much More Likely ● Somewhat Increase / Somewhat More Likely ● No Effect
● Somewhat Decrease / Somewhat Less Likely ● Significantly Decrease / Much Less Likely

Confidence: 16 | 18 | 27 | 14 | 25

Voting Likelihood: 11 | 14 | 28 | 15 | 32

Impact on confidence and electability requiring proof of citizenship to register to vote

● Significantly Increase / Much More Likely ● Somewhat Increase / Somewhat More Likely ● No Effect
● Somewhat Decrease / Somewhat Less Likely ● Significantly Decrease / Much Less Likely

Confidence: 41 | 19 | 14 | 11 | 15

Voting Likelihood: 31 | 18 | 18 | 13 | 19

Conclusion

Utah voters' views of election reforms that lawmakers either enacted in 2025 or are considering in 2026 point to two conclusions: (1) reforms that burden the fundamental right to self-government by interfering with the ease of casting a ballot by mail decrease voter confidence and legislator electability, and (2) reforms that require voters to show that they are registering and voting legally boost voter confidence and legislator electability.

The available evidence points to a clear path forward for election reform in Utah. When voter opinion, the fact that a large portion of Utah voters cast their ballot by mail, and the lack of evidence of voter fraud in Utah are taken together, strengthening voter ID/citizenship documentation without increasing burdens on the right to cast a ballot by mail should maximize voter confidence and election integrity. Implementing commonly used electronic verification methods for voter ID and proof-of-citizenship policies offers a reasonable means of achieving this important election policy goal.

Methodology: Registered Utah voters were randomly sampled from a previously recruited voter opinion panel and from the Utah voter file, producing a survey size of n=623. Interviews were conducted using self-administered online interviews with invitations sent via email and text. Interviews were fielded September 24 – October 6, 2025. The margin of error is +/- 3.9 percentage points. The data were weighted to match the demographics of Utah registered voters in regard to gender, age, race, education level, political party registration, and congressional district.

For more information, visit SutherlandInstitute.org

To learn more about Y² Analytics, visit https://y2analytics.com/

To learn how to support work like this, visit SutherlandInstitute.org/donate

Derek Monson is Executive Director at Sutherland Institute. As Executive Director, he coordinates the work of the various departments of Sutherland Institute around the execution of its strategic growth plan. He also directly oversees the operations and policy departments. Derek has bachelor's degrees in economics and political science from Brigham Young University and a master's degree in finance from the University of Utah, and is married with three children.

As Development Coordinator, Ford combines his background in policy research and fundraising to best serve and support Sutherland's donors by ensuring that their giving fully aligns with their priorities. Ford has a master's degree in international affairs and global enterprise from the University of Utah and a bachelor's degree in history and international studies from Baylor University.