"African Americans possess photo IDs at lower rates than other people of color, but black youth also exhibited the greatest increase in voter turnout in 2008 Election turnout among young people of color, including African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans, may drop by nearly 700,000 voters in states with new photo ID laws, a decline potentially impacting presidential contests in the battleground states of Florida and Pennsylvania, according to a report released today by the Black Youth Project.

Completed by Cathy Cohen, a University of Chicago political science professor, and Jon C. Rogowski, an assistant political science professor at Washington University, the report found that turnout among young minority voters in states with new restrictive ID laws could fall below 2004 and 2008 levels. The projections include Blacks, Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans and Pacific Islanders.

"Voter turnout among young people may be significantly reduced because of these laws," said Cohen. "The demobilizing effects of these new laws are likely to be greater among young people of color than for young whites. We estimate that between 538,000 and 696,000 young people of color may be demobilized by photo ID laws that dilute the influence of young voters of color at the ballot box, potentially shifting outcomes in competitive races."

Over the last two years, more than two-thirds of the nation's 50 states have sought to increase restrictions on the kinds of identification that citizens must show before being allowed to vote, according to the report. As a result, nine states now have laws requiring citizens to show government-issued photo identification before casting a ballot. Eight other states enacted

similar measures, but offer a limited set of alternatives for those without IDs. Only two of these laws were enacted prior to the 2008 election.

Some of the photo ID proposals have been defeated or denied. For instance, the U.S. Department of Justice invoked the Voting Rights Act and refused to grant clearance to laws passed in South Carolina and Texas, and the Wisconsin law was declared unconstitutional earlier this year. Legal action is ongoing in other states, including Pennsylvania, with civil rights and social justice organizations offering strong opposition to the measures that are likely to restrict voting.

"Engaging young people--our future leaders--in the political process and motivating them to vote should be among our highest priorities as a democracy," said Marc H. Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League. "While we are disheartened to see the apparently systematic way in which the minority youth vote is being undermined, we are committed to meeting this assault with redoubled efforts to ensure that everyone who is eligible to vote can and does vote. Nothing less than the future of our political process is at stake."

Judith Browne Dianis, co-director of the Advancement Project, expressed concern over the laws. "The voting booth is the one place in America where everyone has an equal voice," said Browne Dianis, whose organization is engaged in the legal battles over the photo ID laws in the states. "It's wrong for politicians to manipulate election laws for their own partisan gain. These photo ID laws have a disproportionate impact on people of color, so if we want our country to live up to its democratic ideals, then our voting system must be free, fair and accessible to all eligible Americans."

Rogowski said the new laws may impact the presidential contest, as well as at least 16 competitive House races across the country where photo identification requirements will likely disproportionately impact minority voters.

In Florida, a crucial battleground state in the presidential race, voters are required to show photo identification or some other form of ID that displays a signature. More than 100,000 youths of color in the state could be demobilized by these new voting requirements - far more votes than separated George W. Bush and Al Gore in the 2000 presidential election.

Meanwhile, the report estimated that if Pennsylvania's photo identification law is upheld by the State Supreme Court, 37,000 to 44,000 young people of color may stay home or be denied the right to vote, significantly influencing the state's presidential contest.

While these laws are likely to disproportionately demobilize all youth of color, they may have

more severe consequences for young blacks. Citing data from the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law, the report said that 11 percent of American citizens don't have government-issued photo identification such as a driver's license, state ID card, military ID or a passport. But only nine percent of whites lacked photo identification, compared with 16 percent of Latinos and 25 percent of blacks.

"African Americans possess photo IDs at lower rates than other people of color, but black youth also exhibited the greatest increase in voter turnout in 2008 compared to 2004," Cohen said. "These laws, therefore, create additional challenges for sustaining high levels of participation among African American and other youth of color and highlight the need for campaign, community and civic organizations to devote increased efforts to mobilizing young voters of color in November as well as contesting these laws over the long run."

The entire report can be downloaded at:
http://research.blackyouthproject.com/files/2012/09/Youth-of-Color-and-Photo-ID-Laws.pdf