Targeting Ohio's Ballot Box:
How Foreign Actors Could Exploit Fake IDs to Undermine Elections

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has intercepted tens of thousands of counterfeit driver's licenses in recent years - many arriving from China - and destined for Ohio or nearby states. These seizures expose a troubling vulnerability: Could foreign governments breach Ohio's voter registration and ballot system to register ineligible voters and cast fraudulent votes?

Evidence suggests the answer is yes—and it may already be happening.

Vulnerabilities in Ohio's Voter Registration System

Ohio *does not verify identity* before adding individuals to the voter rolls. If someone registers using a driver's license, state ID or last four digits of a social security number, their information is accepted as truthful and they are added to the voter rolls without confirming their identity through state or federal databases.

A Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) and Social Security Administration (SSA) verification may later flag the registration as a "mismatch", prompting the Board of Elections to mail a confirmation notice. Tens of thousands of Ohio voters consistently appear on Ohio's voter rolls with a mismatch to BMV or SSA records; however, they can still vote a regular ballot, including by mail from anywhere in the world without a voter ID. Alarmingly, by the act of voting, the "mismatch" flag is removed even if identity was never confirmed against a state or federal database.

Fake IDs Can Be Used to Register and Vote in Ohio Today

Despite a 2023 Ohio law requiring a photo ID to vote in person, poll workers only check if the ID matches voter registration data – yet this data may include registrations that are not authentic or linked to federal or state databases. A fake ID used to register can be used again to vote. For mail-in voting, verification is even looser: the same ID number used to register can simply be used again to vote.

How Foreign Actors Could Exploit the Ohio's Election System

A hostile nation could:

1. Mass-produce fake Ohio driver's licenses.
2. Distribute them to operatives or unsuspecting recipients, including college students.
3. Use them to register fake voters or impersonate real ones.
4. Request mail-in ballots using fraudulent or unverified credentials.
5. Mail illegal ballots in quantities large enough to alter close races.

Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) Interceptions — A Timeline of Threats

These aren't hypothetical risks. CBP has repeatedly seized shipments of fake IDs that expose the ease with which bad actors could access voter registration credentials. Below are key interceptions that demonstrate how serious this threat is—*particularly to states like Ohio:*

Nov. 25, 2019: CBP Louisville intercepted **2,909** counterfeit driver's licenses and **3,123** blank card stocks from China, *with many destined for Ohio*. Another **527** were seized by CBP Memphis.

July 27, 2020: Chicago CBP officers seized **19,888** fake U.S. driver's licenses in 1,513 shipments, mostly from China and Hong Kong, with *many bound for Ohio* and neighboring states.

Jan. 12, 2022: CBP intercepted **2,211** fake international licenses and booklets shipped from New York and Florida. These "breeder documents" help create new fake IDs.

Mar. 29, 2022: CBP Cincinnati seized **119** counterfeit U.S. driver's licenses from Hong Kong hidden in shipments *headed to Ohio*, Indiana, Texas, and Illinois.

Aug. 14, 2024: CBP Chicago seized **1,020** fake driver's licenses from Hong Kong in 40 separate shipments—*many destined for Ohio*.

Jan. 29, 2025: CBP Chicago intercepted **984** counterfeit driver's licenses in one week. Many were bound for college campuses—prime targets for mail-in ballot fraud using fake registrations.

The question now becomes, *"How many fake IDs have been received without CBP interception?"*

Would Pending Ohio Legislation Fix This?

As introduced, Senate Bill 153 and House Bill 233 do not close key loopholes. Individuals already registered with fake IDs can still vote using the same fake IDs. New fraudulent registrations could continue to slip through a complicated and error-prone verification process.

A Clear Path Forward

A straightforward, proactive solution would be to *verify voter eligibility against relevant federal databases before registration.* This reflects the strategy publicly outlined by Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose in August 2024, and aligns with Executive Order 14248, issued by President Trump.

Further safeguards should include the following, with limited exceptions:

- Registrants should be required to appear in person at the time of registration or thereafter – either at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles or county Board of Elections - with valid proof of identity before being eligible to receive a mail-in ballot. Any prior in-person vote would satisfy this requirement.
- Any existing registration that cannot be matched to a federal database *must* be required to vote provisionally, and present identity documentation that is verified through a federal database before the vote is counted.

Conclusion: The Threat of Fake IDs Is Real

CBP has confirmed the mass production and infiltration of fake IDs – and their presence in Ohio. These IDs can be used to register fake voters, request mail-in ballots, and cast votes that should never be counted. With tens of thousands of counterfeit IDs already intercepted, it's clear that foreign actors possess the tools necessary to exploit Ohio's current election system.

Unless Ohio takes decisive action to verify voter identities before registration, confirm the identities of already registered voters before their votes are counted, and rigorously secure its mail-in ballot process, the state remains vulnerable to foreign interference. Without these safeguards, the injection of fraudulent ballots remains a real possibility – threatening to dilute the voices of eligible voters and undermine public confidence in Ohio's elections.