



The Phyllis Schlafly Report

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Mail-In Voting: Return to Sender

Unlike the opening of schools, the election or reelection of the president cannot be delayed, because its timetable is written into the Constitution. It's too late now to change the procedures by which our ballots will be cast and counted, and "return to sender" should apply to the proposal to elect our president by mail.

Electing the president involves tens of thousands of officials in 50 states and over 4,000 counties, not to mention the massive volunteer army of citizens who staff over 100,000 polling places. Adherence to proper procedure is a vital safeguard as we select a single person to exercise what the Constitution calls "the executive power" of the United States.

With so much riding on the outcome, we must resist the pressure by Democrats to use COVID-19 as a pretext to change the process at the last minute. Despite the pandemic, sports leagues have not changed the rules by which hits, runs, errors, touchdowns, extra points, goals, and other game-winning events are measured and tabulated.

Even Democrat-leaning columnists are beginning to recognize that it is just not feasible for the widespread use of mail-in ballots in this election, as some have called for. Partly it is a question of scale: our election system was not built for 100 million ballots to be sent out to eligible voters and then mailed back and tabulated in the short time available.

Nor is there any way for millions of mail-in ballots to be counted fairly and accurately enough for Americans to accept the candidate who declares victory in such an untested process. No system ever works perfectly the first time it is used, but the winner will be entitled to the keys to the White House, the nuclear "football," and the appointment of judges for the next four years.

Over 200 lawsuits have already been filed, mostly by Democrats, in a well-funded effort to change various aspects of the process by which the upcoming election will be conducted. Here are a few examples, but there are many more in the pipeline that could affect the outcome.

In Texas, the Democrat county clerk of massive Harris County (Houston) announced plans to mail absentee ballot applications to all 2.2 million registered voters. The Republican state attorney general filed suit to stop that plan because state law limits absentee ballots to persons with health disabilities or other good reasons for not casting a ballot in person at a polling place.

In Iowa, two Democrat county clerks were sending ballot applications in which critical voter information was "prepopulated." In other words, the registered voter's personal information (including voter ID number) was already filled in, ostensibly for the voter's convenience.

Judges in the two counties, Linn (population 200,000) and Woodbury (population 100,000), issued separate rulings last month putting a stop to that practice, which could have allowed someone other than the voter to submit a prepopulated ballot application. Both judges ordered their county clerks to issue new absentee ballot applications with blanks to be fully completed by the voter as state law requires.

In both counties, the clerks had repeated the Democrats' mantra that precautions are unnecessary because voter fraud is virtually non-existent, but as Judge Patrick Tott of Woodbury County pointed out, "it is also the type of fraud that is almost impossible to detect."

"From a practical perspective," Judge Tott continued, "once fraud has occurred it will already likely be too late. Sending out absentee ballot requests with all the information that a person that intends to commit fraud would need certainly does not limit the likelihood of fraud taking place, but would likely help to facilitate it."

Linn County Judge Ian Thornhill separately observed: "It is implausible to conclude that near total completion of an absentee ballot application by the auditor is authorized under Iowa law where the legislature has specifically forbidden government officials from partially completing the same document."

As the two Iowa decisions illustrate, legitimate absentee ballots require a high degree of time and

attention by both the voter and the county clerk (or auditor, as the county official is called in Iowa). Most counties are unprepared to cope with a surge in absentee ballots, and most voters are likewise unprepared to cope with the amount of paperwork required to vote absentee.

Mail-in voting is too complicated for too many voters. There are too many ways in which a careless voter can spoil his ballot, causing it to be rejected by election officials, with no time to fix or cure the mistake.

Many voters would run out of time to complete the process of requesting and casting an absentee or mail-in ballot. According to a recent survey by the *New York Times*, 35 states do not allow enough time to request, receive, and return a mail-in ballot.

Voting By Mail Cannot Elect a President

On the first night of the Republican convention, CNN cut away from President Trump's speech because, as anchor Anderson Cooper arrogantly explained, Trump "started off falsely attacking mail-in voting. He's continuing to attack mail-in voting as his postmaster general testifies that the attacks are 'unhelpful.'"

CNN did not explain why Trump's criticisms of mail-in voting were "false" or who gave it the right to censor the President's remarks, when even NPR and the *Washington Post* report on the hazards of delivering ballots by mail. Putting aside the obvious potential for fraud when voters do not appear in person, the normal error rate of the Postal Service is just too great for a presidential election.

In the 2020 primaries, when millions voted by mail for the first time, we saw how badly the system failed in its mission to deliver ballots in time to be counted. NPR reported that at least 550,000 mail-in votes were rejected by election officials in 30 states, while the *Washington Post* said 534,000 were rejected in 23 states.

The number of rejected ballots was more than 60% higher than the 316,000 mail ballots rejected in all 50 states in the 2016 general election. In the crucial states of Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin, which Trump won by a combined 80,000 votes in 2016, some 60,480 mail-in ballots were rejected in this year's primary elections.

There are many valid reasons why mail-in ballots might not be counted by election authorities. Reasons include lack of a required signature on the proper line; the signature does not match the voter's signature on file; lack of a postmark on the envelope; and the ballot arrives too late.

There is no way the voter can cure any of these defects, or even be notified that his ballot is being rejected. Vote tallies must be completed and turned in to the secretary of state by a deadline which is often 7 to 14 days after the election.

While elections for state or local offices can be disputed, litigated, and even redone amid a system failure, the election for President of the United States allows no such leeway. The Supreme Court ruled in *Bush v. Gore* (2000) that vote counts must be completed in time for the Electoral College to meet on the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December, a date which cannot be postponed.

An official U.S. postmark on the envelope containing the ballot has long been required as proof that the ballot was mailed before election day. Postmarks are supposed to be applied to first-class mail, but many envelopes are delivered without a legible postmark, thereby invalidating the ballot.

Five Western states have conducted all-mail elections, but they are not battleground states in the race for president. If the vote is not expected to be close in those states, we can tolerate more errors from the election machinery.

The post office was created by the U.S. Constitution and played an important role in American history, but its importance has greatly diminished in recent decades. Tens of millions of Americans have stopped using the Postal Service for receiving and paying bills, because the internet and smartphones are so much more reliable.

Readers may remember when lobbies of the nation's post offices were filled with people picking up Social Security checks on the second or third day of each month. If you remember those days, you may also remember a lineup of disgruntled senior citizens waiting to see a postal clerk because their government checks did not arrive on time.

All those postal customers disappeared when the federal government switched to electronic delivery of Social Security benefits. Other agencies did likewise, distributing food stamps and other welfare benefits by prepaid debit card.

Many other Americans stopped using the post office after they were hit with unexpected late fees because their payments for utilities and credit cards were not delivered promptly. Companies regularly nag their customers to switch to paperless billing, while warning you to allow 7 to 10 days if you insist on paying your bills by mail.

If you file your income tax return electronically, as most taxpayers do, you received your \$1,200 stimulus payment by direct deposit within a few days after Congress appropriated the money. If you are among the declining number of taxpayers who still file your returns by mail (with extra stamps for extra schedules), then you had to wait 60 days or more for it.

If the IRS, Social Security, welfare, unemployment, and banks have abandoned the Postal Service in favor of electronic transactions, why do Democrats insist

on using the creaky old Postal Service to conduct the presidential election? A government agency hobbled by archaic procedures cannot be reinvented in time before Americans cast over 140 million ballots.

How Trump Finds 10M New Votes

To win comfortably in less than two months, President Trump needs to find 10 million new votes. The prospect of millions of dubious mail-in ballots adds further pressure on Republicans to attract votes.

The new voters the GOP needs are those who may be unsure or too afraid to vote at all, or who are disillusioned by the coronavirus pandemic and the responses to it. This includes people who lined up to attend Trump rallies in the past, but failed to show up for his rallies this summer in Oklahoma and South Dakota, primarily due to fear of contracting COVID-19.

Ten million new voters are not easy to find and persuade in the less than two months that remain from now until November 3. Team Biden is confident that Trump cannot pull this out, and that the election is already over.

But in fact the ten million new votes for Trump are there for the asking, and we even know where to look. They are among the roughly 20 million Americans who watched and supported the July 27 news conference by a group of white-coated physicians who endorse early treatment of COVID-19 with hydroxychloroquine (HCQ).

That massive audience, younger and many times the size of the viewership of cable news shows, contains the votes that Republicans can have for the asking. The Big Tech monopolies certainly knew how seriously that audience threatened the candidacy of Joe Biden, so they took down the video almost as quickly as it was posted, despite its immense popularity.

Trump can quench the thirst of those 20 million viewers of the HCQ press conference. Neither addictive nor expensive, hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) is reportedly consumed like water in Africa, where it is routinely used by residents and visitors alike to protect against malaria. Trump will win if he makes it available.

According to Trump's liberal opponents, attending a Trump rally could be as dangerous as visiting a malaria-infected region of Africa. Just as HCQ is prescribed for travelers to Africa, it should be prescribed as a prophylaxis for attendees at Trump rallies where liberals say that participants risk deadly exposure to COVID-19 merely by attending.

Better yet, Trump could arrange for open-minded pharmacists to be there to fill the prescriptions for HCQ on the spot. After taking this preventive medication,

attendees would then rock the rally with new confidence and enthusiasm.

Imagine the twin benefits that would yield for the 20 million Americans seeking access to HCQ: they would obtain the protective medicine they want, and also have the opportunity to help reelect Trump. This would be a "win win" for everyone except Joe Biden, who would ramble incoherently against it.

Instead of seeking new votes as Republicans can be doing, Democrats push for universal mail-in voting that would have no more integrity than the junk mail that clogs our mailboxes. Republicans are right to reject mail-in voting for reasons that include delay, lack of security, and expense.

Recent primary elections in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York were a real-life test of whether mail-in ballots can be delivered in time. The results should refute the idea that an election can be reliably conducted by diverting ballots through the Postal Service.

All three states received 10 to 20 times as many mail-in ballots as they had ever received before, mostly arriving at the last minute or even after election day. New York's Democrat primary was held on June 24, but the selection of nominees in its 16th and 12th congressional districts was not determined until July 17 and August 5, respectively.

Nancy Pelosi recalled the House of Representatives for a rare August session to deal with this self-inflicted crisis. But her solution would shovel money into a federal agency that was never designed to conduct a national election and cannot, even with unlimited resources, provide the security and reliability that Americans rightly demand for this presidential race.

First-class mail volume peaked in 2000 and has fallen steadily in the 20 years since then, with no end in sight. The Postal Service has struggled to fill the gap by delivering more advertising mail and packages, but those competitive services cannot support the massive postal infrastructure if first-class letter mail is replaced by electronic communications.

The Constitution authorized Congress to establish post offices, but it has no responsibility to insure that ballots are delivered on time. First-class postage (currently 55 cents) does not include tracking or delivery confirmation, which can be purchased for an additional \$.80 to \$2.85, and the cost of guaranteed delivery ranges from \$7.50 for 2- to 3-day service to \$26.35 for next-day service.

Victory in November requires saying no to unreliable mail-in voting, but yes to inexpensive, preventative treatment of COVID-19. Let the Trump rallies return with confidence, and carry him to victory.

The Folly of Vote-by-Mail for All

The extended national lockdown caused by the coronavirus has led to many ideas for changing familiar patterns of the American way of life. But COVID-19 is no excuse for undermining the integrity of our presidential elections by switching from in-person to mail-in voting. Until a few years ago, Election Day was a special event in which our sprawling nation came together on the same day to select our next president. Some states honor it with a holiday, and many employers give workers time off to vote.

Less than two months before the most important presidential election of our lifetime, with the Supreme Court on the line, is no time to convert the election machinery of more than 100,000 election precincts to an unprecedented, untested system of any kind. Yet Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer seeks to send absentee ballot applications to 7.7 million people on an error-ridden list of potential voters.

As President Trump rightly tweeted in response, “This was done illegally and without authorization. I will ask to hold up funding to Michigan if they want to go down this Voter Fraud path!”

California Governor Gavin Newsom is taking Michigan’s mistake one step further. He issued an executive order to mail not just an application, but the actual ballot to the state’s entire voter registration list riddled with inaccuracies.

No state has ever done that before, including the five states that conduct mail elections, because it invites voting by people who are not eligible to vote. Voter intimidation, coercion, fraud, and other forms of illegitimate voting would be possible under blanket mail-in voting.

A new federal lawsuit has been filed to block Governor Newsom’s scheme. “Fraudulent and invalid votes dilute the votes of honest citizens and deprive them of their right to vote in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment,” it says.

Until now, only five states mail unrequested ballots to registered voters, but those states take additional precautions such as requiring verification of voter registrations. None of the five is a swing or battleground state whose electoral vote for president is in doubt.

All other states allow some form of absentee voting, and most of those permit limited mail-in voting for those who request it. States can more easily manage the integrity of a small number of mail-in ballots compared with being overwhelmed by everyone, even illegal aliens, voting by mail.

The costs are staggering, and states ask Congress to

force taxpayers to foot the bill for this folly. Democrat House Speaker Nancy Pelosi already allocated \$400 million in the CARES Act as handouts to states for mail-in voting, but that is not nearly enough.

The last presidential election had more than 128 million votes cast, and tens of dollars per mail-in ballot in new costs would be needed for sending and processing them. Democrats want \$4 billion in new federal funding to pay for mail-in voting now.

Democrats even want unions to be allowed to collect ballots, but that would add unwanted intimidation of voters to the process. Unionized workers should be free from union coercion when they mark their ballots.

Allowing votes to be mailed until Election Day means that counting ballots and declaring a winner may not occur until weeks later. The post office can take up to ten days to deliver a letter, particularly amid high volume, and in a close election the outcome could change when ballots are lost in the mail.

Our political prosperity depends on the smooth transition of power. It is essential that there be a prompt, legitimate presidential winner, but close elections awash in mailed ballots would frustrate that essential goal.

In the key swing state of Pennsylvania, mail-in voting is being adopted for the first time this year, with restrictions. Ballots must be received, not merely mailed, by Election Day, because many letters are not postmarked anymore.

Ballot harvesting is not allowed in Pennsylvania, which is the pernicious practice of paid workers mailing a bundle of ballots supposedly cast by others. Millions of demented nursing home patients can have their “votes” harvested in this manner for the unfair advantage of a candidate funding the harvesting.

Supporters of mail-in voting rely on polling which seems to indicate public support for it. But those polling questions avoid mention of the immense additional costs and the susceptibility of mail-in voting to manipulation and corruption.

President Trump is right to oppose this attempt by Democrats to change our election system. Federal funds should be withheld from states that undermine our elections as Democrats are trying to do.

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