



Correction, Please!

Pelosi, Progressives Press Federal Mandates on Voting, Including Ballot Harvesting



Item: *House “Speaker Nancy Pelosi said the nation must move to a vote-by-mail system amid the ongoing coronavirus crisis and that she plans to advocate funding for that in the next stimulus measure,” according to Bloomberg. “In terms of the elections, I think that we will probably be moving to vote by mail,” Pelosi told MSNBC’s ‘Morning Joe’ program Tuesday [March 31]. She called it ‘a reality of life’ amid the outbreak.”*

“President Donald Trump,” said the Bloomberg article, “criticized efforts by Democrats to expand voter access to November’s presidential election ... in an interview [on March 30] with Fox News. Democrats had pushed for such measures in the \$2.2 trillion rescue package Trump signed last week, but most were removed.”

Item: *Stephen Wolf, elections writer for the Daily Kos, commented on March 9 on that Internet forum: “Thanks in part to Donald Trump lying to downplay the impending crisis for his own self-interest, the virus threatens to create major disruptions in many aspects of life and risk the lives of countless Americans. This is why it’s critical that we take steps as soon as possible to ensure that November’s election runs smoothly, and every state should adopt universal voting by mail.” This piece was reprinted on March 22 (among many such others) by the blog “votingbymail.org.”*

Item: *President Trump “explained this week that he doesn’t want to make it easier for Americans to vote because he believes that would hurt the Republican Party,” declared the editors of the Washington Post on April Fool’s Day. Continuing its misrepresentation of what the president said, the editorial went on: “Mr. Trump is hardly the first Republican to embrace voter suppression for political reasons, but usually they’re at least a little embarrassed to acknowledge their motivation. That’s why they make up stories about voter fraud. And, of course, Mr. Trump is not just any Republican; it’s particularly depressing that the president of the United States would give voice to views that are so patently contrary to the spirit of democracy.”*

“In recent years,” the Post also maintained, “Republicans have vigorously erected barriers to voting, such as rigid voter identification and registration requirements, to discourage minorities, immigrants, young people and other groups seen as leaning Democratic from going to the polls. But seeking to take advantage of a deadly epidemic to depress turnout is a new low.”

Correction: Left-wingers in general and Democrats in particular are misusing the coronavirus crisis in



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an attempt to weaken ballot security and boost their vote totals. But more than that is at risk: The push is actually an attempt to nationalize elections that are — historically and constitutionally — the purview of the states. The objective is a federal mandate that would permanently change how we vote.

As it is, all states already allow voting by mail for absentee ballots; at current count, 19 states do require an excuse to show the inability to vote in person. Though many of the articles about this issue, as well as Speaker Pelosi's usual remarks, don't make it clear, what is really wanted is a universal mandate by the federal government to run balloting processes over the wishes and laws of the various states.

Pelosi (unsuccessfully) made this move in the initial coronavirus relief package; she has made it clear that she wants to repeat her drive. Yet, as commentator Hans von Spakovsky explained in P.J. Media: "As a former county election official in two different states, I can guarantee that every election official in the country would consider the current threat posed by COVID-19 to be more than sufficient reason for citizens to avoid the polls and vote absentee instead." So what's the purpose of Pelosi's possible legislation?

The speaker and her cronies have more in mind. Much more. With the first initial relief bill being held as a potential hostage, this is what was first tried (and is still in play as we write), as summarized by columnist David Limbaugh. The Democrats, as he wrote,

added provisions to increase federal control over elections including federal mandates on how and when we vote, and who collects absentee ballots. Conservatives have long believed these progressive proposals — mandatory early voting, mail-in ballots (which would allow ballots to be marked behind closed doors), same-day registration and legalized ballot harvesting — are aimed at manipulating election outcomes and facilitating voter fraud.

When the *Washington Post* insists that the president just opposes making voting easier, it is not just stretching the truth, it's dismembering it. Trump has expressed confidence in the general election being held in November; he has opposed, among other points, a requirement to have every state prepare for mail-in voting and make other changes.

Here is a more accurate take on the Democrats' drive for a federal takeover of elections, from Representative Rodney Davis (Ill.), the ranking Republican on the elections-focused House Administration Committee. Below is part of what got pulled from the initial bill (and is still supported by Pelosi); as the congressman said in mid-March, the proposal calls for

several federal mandates for states to adopt within the 7 months leading up to the presidential election, like allowing high school students to be poll watchers, requiring polling locations be within walking distance of public transportation, forcing no-excuse absentee voting without allowing states to require identification as a condition of obtaining the ballot, allowing ballots to be cast in any location — disregarding the importance of local elections, and nationalizing the controversial practice of ballot harvesting.

The president was not overstating matters when he said of the \$4 billion provisions in the first package: "The things they had in there were crazy." (After hitting resistance, the bill that eventually passed included \$400 million to the states for elections, without adding specific requirements.)

These actions are consonant with the picture painted by House Majority Whip James Clyburn (D-S.C.),



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who told his Democrat colleagues that the response to the coronavirus crisis presents a “tremendous opportunity to restructure things to fit our vision.”

It is also instructive to follow the money. Backers of the vote-by-mail effort (also called Vote at Home, or VAH) include the Brennan Center for Justice, located at NYU School of Law; Brennan has enjoyed the financing of billionaire George Soros’s Open Society Foundations (always willing to support radical groups and causes), as have other groups involved with the push.

Another major player is Represent.us. As summarized by Morton Kondracke (the retired executive editor of Roll Call and a former “McLaughlin Group” and Fox News commentator), Represent.us “has joined with other large groups — NYU Law’s Brennan Center, Unite America, the National Association of Non-Partisan Reformers, Public Citizen and Common Cause — to mount a multimillion-dollar campaign to spread VAH nationwide, not just for the possibly virus-endangered 2020 election, but *permanently*.” (Emphasis added.)

Another election-related effort in the Senate is not as broad in scope, but it too includes federal requirements. As Kon-dracke put it in Real Clear Politics:

Sens. Amy Klobuchar [Minnesota] and Ron Wyden [Oregon], along with more than a dozen fellow Democrats, have introduced a bill to have absentee ballots delivered to all voters and expand in-person early voting for the 2020 general election. The House Democratic coronavirus bill, besides skewing its \$2 trillion-plus relief more to workers than corporations, contained provisions mandating early and absentee voting.

Lest we forget, the operative rule of the Democrats is derived from the mantra of Rahm Emanuel, the former Chicago mayor and Obama chief of staff — to wit, “You never want a serious crisis to go to waste.” That parallels the Clyburn convenient virus restructuring “to-fit-our-vision” axiom.

The House Select Committee on the Coronavirus Crisis is also redundant. There was already a Congressional Oversight Committee established to monitor this spending, as well as an independent inspector general, plus a Pandemic Response Accountability Committee with other inspectors general.

If you want to see “ballot harvesting” in action, California is the not-so-comely model. California’s Pelosi would like to force all states to follow the Golden State’s example. In January of 2019, well before the virus crisis, the *Wall Street Journal* aptly described the process in California. First came the “Voter’s Choice Act,” which allows counties to mail every voter a ballot, even if he or she didn’t request it. After that, noted the *Journal*, a

separate 2016 law pushed heavily by unions ... legalized what’s known as ballot harvesting. This allows any person — union activists, canvassers, community organizers, campaign staff — to show up at homes and collect mail ballots on behalf of voters.

California law also allows counting mail ballots postmarked or delivered on Election Day, as well as same-day registration and liberal use of provisional ballots. This year the Democratic vote totals piled up long after the polls closed. Fred Whitaker, chairman of the Orange County GOP, has estimated that an extraordinary 250,000 mail-votes were dropped off on Election Day thanks to harvesting.

As could be expected, voters at their own homes found themselves confronted by activists, pushing their candidates and causes. As the *Journal* put it:

This creates opportunities for harvesters to “help” voters complete their ballots, or even pay to finish



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them, and it's easy for the unscrupulous to lose ballots they think may go for the wrong candidate. This is why ballot harvesting is illegal in many states, or at least limited to drop-offs by family members.

Vote harvesters, both legal and illegal, have earned special names — such as “*Boleteros*” in Florida.

Meanwhile, Texas has tried (not very successfully) to tighten its mail-in ballot laws. Harvesting votes is supposedly illegal. Nonetheless, Chuck DeVore, the vice president of the Texas Public Policy Foundation, writes for *Forbes* that mail-in ballot fraud “is so pervasive in some parts of Texas that they have a local name for those who broker election victories: *Politiqueros*.” Indeed, he observes, there are “rarely consequences for ballot harvesters or the campaigns who hire them in the Lone Star State.”

This goes well beyond having volunteers encouraging people to vote. As DeVore notes, ballot harvesters “can get aggressive, they can cut corners, and they can guarantee votes for the politician or group that hired them by taking physical possession of ballots and voting in place of the legal voter.”

In California, even the left-wing *Los Angeles Times* has reported about how illegal aliens (so-called Dreamers) have been seen not just delivering the ballots of others, but “helping” them fill out the ballots.

Yet, the *Washington Post* — in promoting a huge, nationalized takeover of our elections — claims that Republicans just “make up stories about voter fraud.” Well, these stories are not fiction.

The Heritage Foundation apparently had no difficulty in compiling 390 pages into a database, arranged by states, of election fraud cases nationwide. It includes, among others, 1,088 proven instances of voter fraud and 949 criminal convictions. It is broken down into categories, such as impersonation fraud at the polls; false registrations; duplicate voting; fraudulent use of absentee ballots; buying votes; illegal “assistance” at the polls; ineligible voting; altering the vote count; and ballot petition fraud.

This is not, as the foundation puts it, “an exhaustive list, but simply a sampling that demonstrates the many different ways in which fraud is committed.”

When the first stimulus package was being put together in Congress, Representative Davis noted that the states were “already working around the clock to keep their elections functioning during this national emergency.” And as the congressman said, “The last thing they need is for the federal government to impose time-consuming mandates.”

Some states have already adopted a number of the changes being pushed, but those were implemented (and not without problems and considerable debate) by those states — not the central government in Washington.

It is a stark showdown. The House speaker supports a federal power grab of our voting processes — overriding state election laws, forfeiting proper chain-of-custody protection, setting no limit to the number of ballots that individuals might turn in, and dramatically increasing the chances of fraud. On the other side is the chief executive, who calls this “crazy.” Hanging in the balance is your vote.

— William P. Hoar

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