



Coronavirus — Will Election Integrity Be the Next Victim?

As the various government responses to the coronavirus hack away at our liberty, another of our Republic's most sacred safeguards against tyranny, election integrity, came under attack in the recent stimulus bill. HR 748 had, in addition to many other provisions that were both unconstitutional and unwise, a \$400,000,000 appropriation for so-called Election Security Grants. Buried deep in the bill, on page 250 of 335, we find: "For an additional amount for 'Election Security Grants', \$400,000,000, to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus, domestically or internationally, for the 2020 Federal election cycle."



\$400 million may seem small in comparison to the \$6 trillion package in terms of total dollars wasted. And, unfortunately, this seems to be the attitude in Washington, D.C. As bad as this bill is, in terms of devastation to freedom, the undermining of election integrity may be the worst portion of the entire bill. Damage done to election integrity affects not only the current election, but future elections as well. And, if not repealed, any provisions doing damage to election integrity will continue indefinitely.

President Trump ran across at least one of the numerous versions of the bill that were circulating in Congress, apparently not all of which were made public. The liberals, ever mindful of the mantra "Don't let a crisis go to waste," loaded the must-pass legislation with numerous riders. *The Hill*, in a March 30 post, quoted President Trump as saying, "They had things in there about election days and what you do and all sorts of drawbacks. They had things that were just totally crazy."

Trump was referring to provisions that would have given \$4 billion to states to boost mail-in and absentee ballots. Specific proposals included requiring states to send absentee ballots to every registered voter, requiring online and same-day voter registration, and expanding early voting by 15 days.

It may appear at first that President Trump has emerged victorious. The \$4 billion was cut by 90 per cent to \$400 million, and the itemized list of such activities as ordering the states to send absentee ballots to all voters, online voter registration, and same-day voter registration did not appear in the final version of HR 748.

Universal Mail-in Balloting

But don't breathe a sigh of relief yet. There are lawsuits and political advocacy groups that may use this as an opportunity for promoting universal mail-in voting across the country. The new wedge that has the potential for opening the floodgates for universal, no excuse absentee voting is the current list of states where governors have issued shelter-in-place or other similar unconstitutional orders. In addition to violating the First Amendment right of peaceable assembly, such orders can also serve as a blanket



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excuse for absentee ballots due to illness, the rationale being that the individuals, though not sick themselves, are house-bound due to illness based on the unconstitutional orders to all people, even well people, to stay at home.

Representative Thomas Massie (R-Ky.) has been quoted as saying, “Universal mail-in voting would be the end to our republic.” He’s right. In an exclusive interview with *The New American*, Massie explained some of the dangers of ballot harvesting of absentee ballots. He explained how absentee ballots can easily be used for vote buying. When voters vote in person at a precinct, they typically mark or cast their ballots in the privacy of some sort of booth. While there have been some ingenious methods of ensuring that the voters vote as the vote buyers desire when voting at the precinct, such methods are cumbersome and usually difficult to keep secret. Typically, when voting in person at the precinct, the vote buyer really only knows that he has given the voter a free trip to the polls (in order to influence how that person votes), and not necessarily how the voter voted. But when the vote buyer visits the voter with an absentee ballot, he can be certain he has successfully purchased the vote, especially if the vote buyer takes the ballot after it is marked.

Unfortunately, the illegal forms of ballot harvesting can be even worse than Representative Massie described. Some ballot harvesters take advantage of the elderly in nursing homes. Many of these people have poor eyesight, poor hearing, or poor memories. The ballot harvester, in this case, can easily mark the ballot the way he chooses rather than as the voter instructs. Some residents of nursing homes are old and lonely and they don’t care what the ballot harvester does with their ballots so long as they get a friendly visit. Middle-aged women can be very effective at this form of ballot harvesting. They usually establish rapport with seniors quite easily. Sometimes the ballot harvester pays money to the nursing home staff to make sure he or she is the only ballot harvester with access at that nursing home while the blank ballots are there.

Stop the Unconstitutional Overreactions to Coronavirus

As the damage to our economy progresses by draconian measures taken by state governors, the ranks of the unemployed will continue to swell, and so will the number of disaffected persons who will be rightfully angry at government in general and not know who, specifically, in the government was the cause. They will be ripe targets for ballot harvesters. And there will be computerized lists of these people and their contact information at the unemployment offices or other governmental and private aid agencies. Of course, it’s against the law for government agencies and government employees to misuse these lists. But history tells us such laws are ineffective.

The unconstitutional stay-at-home orders are ravaging our economy and making such legislation as the recently passed stimulus bill look attractive to certain helpless people who haven’t been educated in personal finance. They haven’t considered planning for a rainy day. These draconian laws must be rescinded and replaced by sensible means of being careful about not contracting contagious diseases. It’s already too late to repeal this section of HR 748, both in terms of political will and in terms of money already being earmarked for spending by the intended recipients. But there will likely be further stimulus bills introduced, and we must be vigilant of the riders that will be attached to them and not let these bills be used to undermine our elections.



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