



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on February 5, 2026

Trump Calls to “Nationalize” Elections. The Constitutional Solution Is Local.

President Donald Trump has escalated his rhetoric on elections. Over the past days, he has spoken openly about “nationalizing” voting and described the states as “agents” of the federal government. At the same time, his allies in Congress are pressing forward with the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility ([SAVE](#)) Act. At its core sits a federal proof-of-citizenship mandate and a push toward uniform voter identification standards.

The backlash does not come only from Democrats. Constitutional conservatives are objecting as well. They argue that these steps clash with the structure of the Constitution, which places states as the primary, sovereign authorities over election administration, not as subordinate arms of the federal executive.

They also point to the architecture forming around the proposal. The federal voter ID system is far from a narrow reform. It would slot into a broader, [interlinked digital framework](#) that the administration is expanding across multiple sectors.

No serious observer dismisses the need for election integrity. Clean rolls and lawful voting are essential. But critics say the assumption that deeper federal involvement is the cure rests on faith and blind, unwarranted partisan trust rather than on evidence.

Trump’s Case

Trump laid out his position bluntly in a Monday [podcast interview](#) with former FBI official Dan Bongino. Linking illegal immigration to election outcomes, he urged Republicans to seize control:

The Republicans should say, “We want to take over — we should take over the voting” in at least many — 15 — places. The Republicans ought to nationalize the voting.

That, he argued, would resolve the “crookedly” run local elections that allow noncitizens to vote.

At a White House event the next day, when [asked to clarify](#) his call, he maintained that if a state “can’t run an election,” federal authorities should act. He continued:

If you think about it, a state is an agent for the federal government in elections. I don’t know why the federal government doesn’t do them anyway.



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As examples of “horribly corrupt” places that “rig” the elections, he particularly named Detroit, Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, and Atlanta.

That same day, reporters reminded White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt that it is the states that oversee elections by law. [She replied](#):

The president believes in the United States Constitution. However, he believes there has obviously been a lot of fraud and irregularities that have taken place in American elections.

That framing is telling. It treats constitutional limits not as guardrails that protect elections, but as constraints that stand in the way of federal action.

The SAVE Act, on Paper and in Practice

Leavitt has tied the president’s rhetoric directly to the SAVE Act, presenting it as a straightforward and “popular” election integrity reform. The pitch is simple. Only citizens should vote in federal elections. Require documentary proof of citizenship at registration. Add photo identification. Standardize the rules, and fraud supposedly becomes impossible.

The bill amends the [National Voter Registration Act](#) to mandate “documentary proof of United States citizenship” for federal voter registration. Acceptable documents listed in the bill include a [REAL ID](#)-compliant form of identification indicating U.S. citizenship, a valid U.S. passport, certain military identification paired with service records showing U.S. birthplace, certified birth certificates, naturalization certificates, and other official records establishing citizenship. States would be prohibited from accepting and processing voter registration applications for federal elections unless such proof is provided.

The proposal reaches deeply into existing registration systems. It modifies procedures connected to motor vehicle registration, mail-based registration, and the federal voter registration form overseen by the proposed Election Assistance Commission. It also requires states to take ongoing steps to ensure that only citizens remain on federal voter rolls and to remove registrants if verified information shows they are not U.S. citizens.

The House passed the measure in April 2025, giving it real political weight even as its fate in the Senate remains uncertain.

To supporters, the bill’s breadth is the strength. It promises uniform standards and tighter screening.

Besides the question of constitutionality, critics focus on the infrastructure behind the measures. Verification requires databases, and databases link and expand, with notorious Deep State entities such as [Palantir already sitting at their core](#). In this scheme, a federal voter credential becomes a crucial node in a growing national identity system, extending federal reach well beyond the ballot box.

Expanding Federal Involvement

The election push does not stand alone. Last March, Trump signed an [executive order](#) aimed at reshaping national voter registration rules. Federal courts [blocked parts of the directive](#), citing limits on presidential authority. The Justice Department has also [sought](#) extensive voter registration data from numerous states, including addresses, birth dates, and partial Social Security numbers. Lawsuits followed when states declined to provide full records.



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The 2020 election became a political and legal flashpoint. Numerous investigations, independent analyses, and firsthand accounts documented serious irregularities and procedural breakdowns across multiple jurisdictions. Courts, however, often declined to address the merits, dismissing many challenges on procedural grounds. Then-Attorney General Bill Barr publicly stated that the Justice Department found no evidence of outcome-determinative fraud, a conclusion that many election-integrity advocates, including this magazine, have strongly disputed.

Recent episodes have heightened unease. Federal agents executed a search warrant at a Fulton County, Georgia, elections office connected to 2020 ballots. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard was present and [said](#) the president requested her attendance. The optics of senior intelligence leadership at a local election facility reinforced concerns about gradual federal encroachment into state-run election administration.

The Remedy Is Local

Supporters of giving Washington greater control over elections sell it as a practical fix. They assume that stronger federal authority, treated as inherently benevolent, will produce more-secure elections. But integrity does not increase with distance from voters. Nor does it require centralization. States can adopt voter ID laws on their own, and [many already have](#). They can strengthen audits, tighten roll maintenance, and improve procedures without handing control to Washington.

Federalization advocates fall back on a harder claim: What if a state or city is deliberately manipulating elections?

The Constitution still does not assign the remedy to federal administrators. Instead, it places responsibility where self-government truly belongs — on the people. Meaningful action exists at every level. Constituents can demand transparency from county election boards, where most operational decisions occur. Attending meetings, requesting records, and scrutinizing chain-of-custody procedures and audits all sit within public reach. People can serve as poll workers and observers, press state legislatures to tighten laws and remove weak officials, and bring disputes to state courts. They can also run for the offices that actually control and administer elections.

That is the safeguard the proponents of federalization overlook, perhaps on purpose. The closer authority is to voters, the more leverage citizens have.

Election integrity matters. So does the constitutional design that disperses power instead of concentrating it. Turning the ballot into another instrument of federal administration neither cures corruption nor restores trust. It shifts control upward into a political habitat defined by special interests and chronic unaccountability — the exact opposite of the transparency and proximity that real election integrity requires.

Finally, Washington's record of pushing beyond its constitutional limits in other spheres of public life is hardly a model of success, and gives little reason to expect a better outcome here.



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