



The Foundation of Election Fraud: Two Gateways to Scamming the System

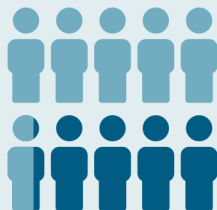
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The American electoral system is not secure

If America were a house, then the sanctity and authenticity of the vote would be the foundation. But when there isn't a solid foundation or we allow rot and decay to spread, the structure built above it crumbles. That is the problem plaguing elections today.

The 2020 presidential election cycle was as contentious as any in recent memory. Due to the pandemic, states changed vote-by-mail policies that made it easier for individuals to vote.¹ These moves led to unprecedented turnout, which is presumably a good thing. The problem is that the election system was not equipped to handle it. Massive cracks in the foundation were not only exposed, but they were also exploited.

For example, the key swing state of Pennsylvania was not properly maintaining its voter rolls. This led to thousands of potentially deceased voters still being registered.² Prior to the 2020 election, a lawsuit was filed against the Department of State to require the state to scrub the rolls.³ The lawsuit was recently settled, requiring the state to compare available death data against the state's registration list.⁴



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Given this example, it is no surprise that less than 60 percent of Americans were confident that ballots would be accurately cast and counted.⁵

There are two major vulnerabilities with voter registration nationwide: lax policies that allow for same-day voter registration, and inaccurate, outdated voter rolls. These vulnerabilities are two of the primary culprits that caused voters to lose faith and feel apathetic toward the process.

Gateway #1: Voters can register and vote on the same day

Twenty-one states, including key swing states like Michigan and Wisconsin, allow for same-day voter registration.⁶⁻⁷⁻⁸ For voters who take advantage of this option, states typically verify their eligibility after the election, leaving the door open for ineligible voting, or for individuals to vote multiple times.

Nevada is a prime example of this. There were 433,000 unregistered residents in the state during the previous election cycle.⁹ Under current state law, it would be possible for all of these residents to walk into their local polling place on election day, register, and vote—which would leave election workers unprepared and ill-equipped to determine the new registrants' eligibility.

Not only is this unfair for voters that did their due diligence in advance, but it also cripples the ability of poll workers and volunteers to ensure elections are fair and accurate, undermining the foundation of the election process.

As if this is not problematic enough, there is no path for recourse after a voter's registration is deemed invalid and the voter ineligible. Votes are anonymous and untraceable. Numerous individuals across these 20 states and Washington D.C. can register to vote on Election Day, cast a ballot, and impact elections, even though their eligibility status is unknown.¹⁰

In America, every vote is sacred. But with such lax registration policies, it is easier for bad actors to exploit the system and cancel out the votes of veterans, seniors, and hardworking taxpayers by rigging the game.

Meet Tony, the election conman

Tony is in his mid-40s, has a dog, works for a local landscaping company, and woke up on Election Day ready to vote. The local paper has billed the mayoral race as one of the most critical in decades. Tony is relatively informed and wants his voice to be heard. But there is just one problem—Tony lives in the neighboring town and is ineligible to vote.



Determined not to let this stop him, he heads to the polls late in the afternoon on Election Day. Armed with false information and a smile that says, "trust me," Tony registers to vote and casts his ballot for his preferred candidate. It takes days to verify the results of the highly contested election. At the end of the week, it is announced the candidate Tony voted for won by a razor thin margin—just a handful of votes. Half the town rejoices while the other half hangs their head in defeat. It is democracy in action. The problem, though, is that democracy was thwarted by Tony and an unknown number of other fraudulent voters—including some who are registered at multiple addresses or who do not live in Tony's town at all, but rather were bussed in by one of the mayoral campaigns to swing the election.

Closing the door to this type of fraud is much easier done on the front end as opposed to seeking recourse after the fraud has been committed. Ending this practice could not only stamp out potential fraud but also ease the minds of voters who are concerned about the legitimacy and sanctity of elections.

Gateway #2: State voter rolls are full of bad, outdated data

Another major problem is how infrequent state voter rolls are scrubbed. In Nevada, this problem reared its ugly head when absentee ballots were mailed to every registered voter in the state even though at least 41,000 Nevadans had allegedly not voted or made changes to their registration in more than a decade.¹¹ Even worse, a number of these individuals were likely deceased.¹²



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But unfortunately, this was not just a Nevada problem: deceased individuals voted in multiple states during the 2020 election, including in many critical swing states.¹³⁻¹⁴

- **Bruce Bartman (Pennsylvania)** cast a ballot for his deceased mother in the 2020 election, and also registered his deceased mother-in-law to vote.¹⁵
- **Caesar Abutin (California)** fraudulently cast a vote for his mother in three elections between 2012 and 2014 even though his mother died in 2006.¹⁶
- **Danielle Dooner (Pennsylvania)** completed an absentee ballot application for her mother in October, even though she died in September.¹⁷
- **Rosemarie Hartle (Nevada)** voted in the 2020 election, even though she passed away in 2017.¹⁸
- **Melissa Fisher (Pennsylvania)** signed a ballot declaration in place of her mother in October, despite her mother passing in September.¹⁹

Dirty voter rolls are a clear and obvious gateway to voter fraud. The anonymity of a vote makes it nearly impossible to determine who is casting votes for the deceased, ineligible, or even a family member. The solution is to close the door to this type of fraud before it happens.

The solution: Clean outdated voter rolls and reform same-day registration

State lawmakers can close these gateways to fraud by requiring that all voter registration applications be submitted by a specified time, such as 30 days before an election. Such a move would provide voters with ample time to submit, update, or correct information associated with their eligibility, and would reduce opportunities for fraudsters to take advantage of a lax system. Not only would it close the door for fraudsters, but it would also make it easier for election workers to perform their duties.

Lawmakers should also demand election officials scrub the voter rolls multiple times per year, with one of those scrubs coming within a few months of an election. States can do this by cross-referencing voter rolls with relevant state and public data (such as Corrections records), national data (such as the National Change of Address records), and local data (such as voter registration information).

Ohio has similar policies in place. For example, the state authorizes agencies to share data with one another, including the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Department of Health, the Department of Job and Family Services, the Department of Medicaid, and the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.²⁰ These commonsense policies have been upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court.²¹

Beyond these measures, state lawmakers should require their state election offices provide a detailed report to the legislature that details how their voter registration database is managed annually. These commonsense moves are a first step toward transparency in elections.

The time to act is now

The 2020 election cycle undoubtedly left a sour taste in the mouths of millions. The time for state lawmakers to act is now, and commonsense reforms that safeguard elections provide that opportunity.

States nationwide are moving on election integrity. Georgia, Florida, Iowa, and other states have all made strides toward protecting the sanctity of the vote. Ending same-day voter registration and scrubbing the voter rolls are good steps toward restoring public faith and trust in elections and are crucial moves that must be made to guarantee the success of other election integrity efforts.

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