

As voting begins, Trump and his Republican allies intensify efforts to suppress and subvert election

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With the US presidential election just 45 days away, Republicans across the country are intensifying their efforts to sow doubt in the election results and change the rules in favor of former President Donald Trump.

On Friday in Georgia, one of the few “battleground” states that will likely decide the election, the pro-Trump majority on the Georgia State Election Board adopted a rule requiring all 159 counties to hand count, in addition to a machine count, every ballot on election day, or the following day.

The new rule requires a poll manager and two election workers, after receiving previously tabulated ballots, to unseal the boxes, remove all the ballots, and “independently count the total number of ballots removed from the scanner, sorting into stacks of 50 ballots, continuing until all of the ballots have been counted separately by each of the three poll officers.”

The rule stipulates that process of “opening, counting, and resealing ballots must be conducted in the presence of the relevant poll manager or assistant poll manager.”

The new rule all but guarantees elections results in populous counties, such as Fulton, which lean heavily Democratic, will not be known for several days, while smaller counties, that generally lean Republican, will be able to report results sooner.

Efforts to suppress and subvert the election come as early voting began Friday in Virginia, South Dakota and Minnesota. Dozens of other states have already mailed out absentee and military ballots as well. There is no question that Trump, as he did in the 2020 and 2016 election, will use initial results from smaller counties to claim “victory” while rejecting votes from larger counties tabulated after election day.

In an interview with the *New York Times* on Friday on the adoption of the new rules in Georgia, the election supervisor of Irwin County, a small, rural south Georgia county with a white majority, told the paper he was “furious.” Ethan

Compton, while observing the board discuss the proposed rule change, said the rules will delay the election results and “will not help with integrity.”

In a letter sent to the election board prior to the adoption of the new hand count ballot rule, the American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, and Public Rights Project, warned it would “impose substantial burdens on elections workers and undermine public trust in the electoral process.”

They added that the Board did not “identify any circumstances or reasons for changing the rules so significantly at this late date,” and pointed to the fact that the current Secretary of State, Republican Brad Raffensperger, also opposed the changes. In a letter from the Georgia Secretary of State’s office opposing the ruling changes, dated August 15, Raffensperger observed: “Quick reporting of results is a hallmark of Georgia’s election administration and bolsters voter confidence. Delays in results create a vacuum that leads to misinformation and disinformation.”

This is the second major rule change the Georgia State Election Board has adopted to favor Trump and undermine the election results in as many months. In August, the Board, by the same 3-2 margin, passed a rule that gives local election supervisors, normally an administrative position, the power to conduct “reasonable inquiries” if they suspect voter fraud.

As is the case with the mandatory hand-counting of ballots, the purpose of these “inquiries” is not to actually root out any suspected fraud, but to sow doubts in the election itself at a county level.

There is no doubt that these anti-democratic efforts are being coordinated with the Trump campaign. On September 18, the *Guardian* reported on emails obtained by Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW) through a public records request which showed that election officials

from “at least five counties” in Georgia, have been communicating with far-right groups such as the Tea Party Patriots and the Election Integrity Network (EIN) since at least January 2024.

EIN is led by Clea Mitchell, a top Republican lawyer and “dear friend” of Virginia Thomas, wife of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.

In one of the emails reviewed by the *Guardian*, county election board members who had previously refused to certify election results in Spalding, Cobb and DeKalb counties received an article by David Hancock, a pro-Trump member of the Gwinnett County board and a member of the Tea Party Patriots. In the article and email, Hancock encouraged them not to certify election results.

In Nebraska, Trump and South Carolina Republican Senator Lindsey Graham are spearheading a campaign to force Governor Jim Pellen (Republican) to call a special session of congress and institute changes for how the state allocates its electoral college votes. Since 1992, Nebraska has awarded its electoral votes based on popular vote within congressional districts, not the “winner take all” method employed in 48 other states, all but Maine.

In 2008, Barack Obama became the first Democrat to win an electoral vote in Nebraska since 1964 after he bested Senator John McCain in the 2nd Congressional district, located on the border of Iowa and Nebraska and encompassing Omaha and its near suburbs. In 2020, Joe Biden also won an electoral vote in the 2nd Congressional district after he beat Trump there by six points.

If Nebraska were to revert to a winner-take-all method, it could change the outcome of the Electoral College in certain scenarios. If Vice President Kamala Harris won the so-called “blue wall” states of Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, but not a single vote in Nebraska, the result would be a tie if Trump won the remaining swing states, Nevada, Arizona, Georgia, and North Carolina.

If there was a tie, the House of Representatives would select the next president, with each state’s delegation getting one vote. While all the House seats are up for re-election in November, Republicans are currently slight favorites to retain the majority they currently have, in which case they would be able to award Trump a second term.

In addition to changing the rules, Republicans are also engaging in voter suppression through the process of voter roll “purging.” Even though the far-right Heritage Foundation, out of more than 1 billion ballots lawfully cast between 2002 and 2022, has documented less than 100 cases of “voter fraud” by “non-citizens,” Trump and the

Republicans have continued to stoke hatred against immigrants and doubt in the election by claiming that millions of “illegals” are on the voter rolls, and casting ballots for Democrats.

On Wednesday, Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt (Republican) announced that more than 453,000 voters had been removed from the registration rolls since January 1, 2021. The largest block of those removed, 194,962, were so-called “inactive voters,” who did not respond to an address verification letter or haven’t participated in “four consecutive general election cycles.” In other words, these are voters who are not dead, haven’t moved, and are citizens with the right to vote, but they are so alienated from the political system that they refuse to go to the polls or reply to letters from the government

In Alabama last Friday, multiple civil rights groups, including the Campaign Legal Center, the Alabama chapter of the NAACP, Fair Elections Center, and Southern Poverty Law Center, filed a lawsuit on behalf of several naturalized citizens targeting Alabama Secretary of State Wes Allen and Attorney General Steve Marshall after they removed 3,200 “non-citizens” were from the voter rolls last month.

Among the plaintiffs include several citizens, many who have lived, worked and voted in the country for decades. Another plaintiff, James Stroop, was born in Melbourne, Florida and has lived in Alabama since 1978. Nevertheless, according to the lawsuit, Stroop, along with several other citizens were removed from the voter registration roll less than 90 days before the election.

Commenting on the “purge program” initiated by election officials to local news network WAFF 48, earlier this week, Kate Huddleston, a senior legal counsel for the Campaign Legal Center, said it was clear “that the program is flawed by design” and that the “purge list has been kept secret” including “the criteria for inclusion.”

Benard Simelton, president of the Alabama chapter of the NAACP and Democratic Party delegate, questioned why the purge list was remaining secret even as names were being removed.

“They go to vote and all of a sudden they find out they can’t vote,” Simelton said. “That’s voter disenfranchisement at its highest form.”



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