The U.S. Has Neither Systemic Voter Fraud Nor Voter Suppression

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Bipartisan attacks on our nation's institutions and the integrity of our electoral processes create the appearance of consensus that our government is illegitimate.

The ink was not yet dry on President Trump's certificate of election in 2016 when The Resistance kicked into high gear, attacking the integrity of our electoral system. Less than a month after his election, Hollywood leftists such as Martin Sheen began running television ads imploring GOP electors to abandon the incoming president and vote for someone else. When that plan went sideways, leftists shifted to a new strategy: Proclaim the president illegitimate by attacking our election system's integrity.

They soon bombarded the American people with outrageous and erroneous claims that Russia hacked our election. They said Trump was a Russian agent. Rachel Maddow used her MSNBC platform to make the case that Vladimir Putin was dictating talking points to the president and otherwise controlling the White House.

All these assertions were proved to be part of a well-orchestrated campaign to undermine the administration's legitimacy, but it didn't stop there. Even after the conclusion of the Robert Mueller probe, which had dozens of FBI agents investigate those claims, some in the media continued to push the notion that it was not the American people who elected Donald Trump, but Russian operatives.

No one has been held accountable for these outlandish claims, which poisoned American political culture and, more significantly, did permanent damage to popular confidence in our electoral process.

Don't Delegitimize Our Electoral Processes

Many political analysts expect that out of anger over perceived vote tampering, both Trump and Joe Biden supporters are willing to protest — perhaps even violently — if their preferred candidate does not prevail in next week's election. Some are complicating matters further by encouraging contenders down the ballot not to accept the election outcome should they come up short.

The modern political left has questioned the legitimacy of our constitutional structures ever since the Supreme Court "selected" George W. Bush in 2000 despite losing the popular vote to Al Gore. The drumbeats to eliminate the Electoral College, "reform" the Senate, and now pack the Supreme Court have only grown.

Some conservatives now appear willing to join in undermining our electoral systems, largely out of a fear that voter fraud will deprive Trump of reelection. They should think twice about the long-term implications that might come from unwittingly dismissing the protections built into those systems.

The Electoral College Guards Against Fraud

Conservatives shouldn't need a reminder that the Founding Founders set up the Electoral College to ensure presidents are elected with national appeal, not just massive support in a handful of states. Historically, this meant that collecting votes in New England or the South alone was insufficient; now, running up the score in coastal cities isn't enough. What few realize, however, is that this system also counterbalances election fraud.

If the country operated under a popular-vote system, all fraudsters would need to do would be to rig the most populous states' ballot boxes — more precisely, the polling places of municipalities with the weakest security protocols and officials most susceptible to influence-peddling. Such scheming is by and large impossible with the Electoral College. Since no one can accurately predict which of the battleground states will determine the outcome of any given election, no one has the knowledge needed to create an effective vote-rigging scheme.

The closest races in recent memory show us just how difficult it is to commit meaningful fraud in presidential elections. The 2016 campaign was ultimately decided by Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania, which Trump won by just 10,000, 20,000, and 40,000 votes, respectively. No one on either side expected that the race would come down to these three states. Since *Bush v. Gore*, we all kept looking to Florida and Ohio, refighting the last battle.

Does fraud still exist? Yes. Will mistakes happen, particularly with increased early, absentee, and mail-in voting during the pandemic? Yes.

The proper response to addressing these problems, however, is to study them, understand their scope, and identify ways to solve them. After all, the Trump administration's voting integrity commission closed up shop without finding evidence of widespread (as opposed to localized) fraud. If there were evidence of systemic fraud, Trump surely would have presented it by now.

Rampant Voter Suppression Isn't Happening

A similar tale can be told about cries of "voter suppression." Sorry, but long lines are indicative of a lack of planning or resources, or too many people wanting to vote weeks early, not a coordinated campaign to disenfranchise the masses.

All that said, significant risks of potential abuse exist in many states' election systems, as I detailed in a report in August. A primary risk is ballot harvesting, which involves third parties collecting and delivering absentee ballots on voters' behalf. An analysis by the nonpartisan Lincoln Network found that many states still allow unrelated third parties to collect ballots, and a May report published by the Republican members of the House Committee on Administration found that members of both parties practiced ballot harvesting during the 2018 midterm elections.

But the risk of ballot harvesting tipping a presidential election is slim. California, where the practice is most widespread, is hardly a swing state, and oversight mechanisms (including both

parties' armies of poll watchers and election lawyers) exist to spot and challenge potential abuse. Legal processes exist to call for recounts or contest results.

Stop Attacking Institutions

Of course, the question remains whether both campaigns will agree to follow normal processes to resolve any disputes — and whether both sides will accept the results.

The rule of law, the basis of our constitutional republic, has always been a backstop against concentrations of power that lead to restrictions on the individual liberty that our political institutions were designed to secure. For the system to continue working, the left needs to rein in its worst impulses, and the right must refrain from joining in.

Bipartisan attacks on our nation's institutions and the integrity of our electoral processes create the appearance of consensus that our government is illegitimate, putting our nation on a dangerous path. Reckless rhetoric instead of evidence-based criticisms will only empower those seeking to radically change the country into something unrecognizable.

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