

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

## Flying the Politically Correct Skies

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American Airlines and Delta may want to reconsider their international route maps. This is getting awkward. Woke and weak corporate executives at [American Airlines](#) and Delta have been trying to signal virtue by opposing, respectively, pending voting reforms in Texas and a new voting law in Georgia. But now it looks like consistency will require the airline bosses to condemn many of the destinations on their international route maps.

American's [website says](#) it serves 50 countries—and a full 150 if you count the markets served by its code-sharing partners. To be fair to Texas, American CEO Doug Parker may have to find something negative to say about nearly all of them. That's because, just like the proposed voting changes in Texas, laws in many locales served by American Airlines apply various measures to ensure the integrity of the ballot, including requiring voter identification.

John Lott [writes](#) at Real Clear Investigations:

Of 47 nations surveyed in Europe -- a place where, on other matters, American progressives often look to with envy -- all but one country requires a government-issued photo voter ID to vote...

Seventy-four percent of European countries entirely ban absentee voting for citizens who reside domestically. Another 6% limit it to those hospitalized or in the military, and they require third-party verification and a photo voter ID. Another 15% require a photo ID for absentee voting.

Similarly, government-issued photo IDs are required to vote by 33 nations in the 37-member Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (which has considerable European overlap).

And even among the rare exceptions like Japan, says Mr. Lott, in some circumstances an ID may be needed:

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Japan provides each voter with tickets that bear unique bar codes. If the voter loses the ticket or accidentally brings the ticket for another family member, polling staff verifies the voter's name and address using a computer with access to the city's database. The voter may have to present government-issued photo identification.

Closer to home, Mr. Lott also notes that after an alleged fraudulent election in 1998, Mexico “mandated voter photo IDs with biometric information, banned absentee ballots, and required in-person voter registration. Despite making registration much more difficult and banning absentee ballots, voter participation rates rose after Mexico implemented the new rules.”

### **Before Lawmakers Cut the Next Beltway Deal**

Wayne Crews of the Competitive Enterprise Institute notes that the release of President Joe Biden’s “biggest-ever” federal budget “is a good time to reflect upon the implications of the fiscal and regulatory tentacles of today’s federal government.” Mr. Crews assigns bipartisan blame:

It’s also a good time to rebuke Republicans’ own proposal to cut a deal to spend \$1 trillion on infrastructure in a political environment of overspending—the already enacted American Rescue Plan, and the “Jobs” and “Families” follow-up plans, even as recovery, economically and health-wise, is already well underway.

One finds nothing much “American” about such national top-down spending and regulatory schemes. In nominal terms, America progressed from the Framers until Ronald Reagan before experiencing a \$1 trillion budget. George W. Bush gave us our first \$2 trillion and \$3 trillion budget; Trump ushered in \$4 trillion. That’ll double to \$8 [trillion] under Biden by 2031.

Even after adjusting for inflation, federal spending has more than doubled since Reagan days, and now President Biden is promising a spending surge like no other. Mr. Crews hopes for “stirrings of a movement to not just allow but expect Americans” to be able to “help themselves, their families, and provide for their own secure retirements and health care, and to pass down intergenerational wealth instead of intergenerational federal debt.”

Makes sense, and the Cato Institute’s Chris Edwards has argued that we don’t really need as much infrastructure as advertised:

What the politicians and news stories don’t tell you is that America’s bridges have been steadily improving for three decades. The Federal Highway Administration produces annual data on the condition of the nation’s more than 600,000 highway bridges. From 1992 to 2017, the agency has data on the number of bridges that are “structurally deficient.” Then the agency switched to new definitions and has data from 2009 to 2020 on the number in “poor” condition... The structurally deficient share fell from 21.7 percent in 1992 to 8.9 percent in 2017, while the poor share fell from 10.1 percent in 2009 to 7.3 percent in 2020...

Not every news story sounds like a press release from a construction lobby group. A 2018 Reuters investigation found that an “analysis of nationwide bridge data reveals the fretting over the safety of bridges and other road infrastructure is overblown.” The article noted that “structurally deficient” bridges need repairs but would be closed if they were actually dangerous. It also noted that America’s roads and bridges compare quite favorably to those in other advanced economies.

For those readers who think we really do need more public infrastructure, there’s also the question of whether the need will be satisfied by the next spending splurge.

In March this column noted that Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg is not a car guy. Rather than emphasizing the need to quickly address the demands of American drivers, Mr. Buttigieg said that some roads need to “go on a diet” and sketched out his plans to dismantle some American infrastructure.

In case anyone thought he was kidding, that same month Mr. Buttigieg’s Federal Highway Administration sent a letter to the executive director of the Texas Department of Transportation urging a pause in the state’s preparations for a Houston road project so that the Biden administration could review “environmental justice concerns.”

Of course in the Washington bureaucracy there is never any shortage of people willing to express concerns. Some might even call it a structural deficiency.