

POLITICS

How Mass Mail-In Voting Changes Everything

When the emphasis in elections shifts from turning out conventional in-person voters to chasing mail-in ballots, we have entered a qualitatively different electoral world than the one we inhabited before.

[Credit: Felipe Sanchez](#)

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Since 2020, elections have been under assault by a complex of leftist lawyers, nonprofits, and election activists as they attempt to implement schemes and introduce administrative changes that fundamentally transform the way elections are conducted.

Most of these changes have been undertaken in the interest of promoting mass mail-in voting. The objective of mail-in voting activists is an electoral world in which polls, historical trends, economic issues, messaging, voter enthusiasm, candidate quality, traditional get-out-the-vote efforts, candidate debates, and voter persuasion no longer matter in elections.

All that ultimately matters in mass mail-in voting states is the number of absentee ballots that can be distributed, harvested, and ultimately counted in local election offices by partisan election activists over the weeks and months preceding election day. Through the strategic expansion of mass mail-in voting, Democrats are creating a new urban based, activist driven electoral playing field where they alone can win.

The idea that mass mail-in voting expands general “voters rights” is not what it appears to be. Instead, the spread of mass mail-in voting since 2020 has greatly increased the political power of urban and university-based bloc voters, partisan election activists, and the many wealthy nonprofits that support them, such as the Center for Tech and Civic Life and the National Vote at Home Institute. Meanwhile, conventional, in-person suburban and rural voters see their votes diluted by a flood of questionable absentee ballots emanating from heavily Democratic cities and university towns.

It is important to understand the insidious logic of mass mail-in voting, as it systematically empowers Democratic Party insiders, big left-leaning nonprofits, and partisan election activists at the expense of conventional, individual voters. Elections based on mass mail-in voting are not normal “elections” as that term has been understood for the last century.



The Democrats' use of mail-in ballots and ballot harvesting techniques to win elections burst into full view in 2020 with the Center for Tech and Civic Life's \$332 million COVID-19 Response Grant Program (“ZuckBucks”), which was aimed at gaining control of election offices in areas that were critical to Democrats in 2020 through large, “strings attached” CTCL grants.

The bulk of that money was used to fund a sophisticated “inside” effort to mobilize the mail-in ballots of specific blocs of voters in order to benefit Democratic candidates. Large CTCL grant recipients were required by the terms of their grants to “encourage and increase absentee voting” mainly through providing “assistance” in absentee ballot completion and the installation of ballot drop boxes, and to “expand strategic voter education & outreach efforts, particularly to historically disenfranchised residents.”

The funding and direction of election administration by highly partisan, demonstrably ideological private actors was virtually unknown in the American political system before the 2020 election.

Big CTCL money had nothing to do with traditional campaign finance, media buys, “dark money” advocacy, or other expenses that are related to increasingly expensive modern elections. It had to do with financing the takeover of election offices at the city and county level by partisan activists, and using those offices as a platform to implement preferred administrative practices, voting methods, ballot harvesting efforts, and data sharing agreements that were favorable to Democratic candidates. Many CTCL funded election offices then became launching pads for intensive multi-media outreach campaigns and precisely targeted, door-to-door voter turnout and mail-in ballot chasing efforts in densely populated urban areas packed with potential Democratic voters.

The explosion of mail-in voting in heavily Democratic urban enclaves in the swing States, fueled by big CTCL money, played a significant—if not a decisive—role in Joe Biden's victory in 2020.



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he most convincing theory of Democrat overperformance in the 2022 midterm election in the face of an objectively terrible political and economic environment is James E. Campbell's “Breakwater Theory,” which focuses on the impact of mail-in “ballot mobilization” in key statewide races with lax mass mail-in voting rules.

According to Campbell, the expected “Red Wave” of 2022 failed to materialize because Democrats concentrated their attention and resources on changing the rules and conducting “ballot mobilization” campaigns (a euphemism for mail-in ballot chasing and mail-in ballot harvesting) in a handful of states.

Strategically, a small set of competitive states allowed [Democrats] to focus their resources and offered, through mail-in voting, performance-enhancing electoral rules conducive to well organized mobilization campaigns that could raise the turnout of Democratic votes in those states. That is just what it did.

The problem with this explanation is that “turnout”—as Campbell uses the term—does not mean “voter turnout” in the conventional sense, because the only people who “turn out” are the Democrat election activists who are chasing and mobilizing mail-in ballots. Handing off a mail-in ballot to a ballot harvester at one’s front door that has been filled out with the assistance of some third party is qualitatively different from going to a designated polling place and voting in person, yet these two dissimilar activities continue to be lumped together under the term “voter turnout.”

In the states that were targeted by Democratic election activists for mass mail-in ballot mobilization, the majority of Democratic voters stayed at home, and under circumstances prevailing before 2020, their “votes” would not have counted because they would not have voted.



It is important to understand that heavily funded mass mail-in “ballot harvesting,” and ballot canvassing, at a scale that is likely to have a significant impact on election results, will not be successful outside of densely populated areas where homogeneous, highly partisan voting ‘blocs’ can be identified.

The logistical difficulties and expense of a mass mail-in ballot mobilization campaign in less densely populated areas with politically diverse populations would be prohibitive. This is why Republican attempts to replicate Democrats’ urban based ballot harvesting machines in other areas will be prone to expensive failure.

Deep blue urban areas and large universities, with their heavy concentrations of Democratic bloc voters, on the other hand, are perfect settings for successful ballot harvesting and

canvassing efforts based on mail-in voting.

Politico's Charlie Mahtesian and Madi Alexander inadvertently illustrate the growing impact of expanded mail-in voting and mail-in ballot “chasing” on statewide elections, as they describe the increasingly Democratic partisan lean of university students. The authors explain how large college towns, especially in states that have relaxed mail-in voting rules, such as Colorado, Michigan, and Wisconsin, have become “Republican-Killing Death Star[s].”

As Mark Graul, a Republican strategist who ran George W. Bush's 2004 reelection campaign in Wisconsin, put it:

This is a really big deal....What Democrats are doing in Dane County [home of the University of Wisconsin] is truly making it impossible for Republicans to win a statewide race.

Mahtesian and Alexander are right about the leftist lean of college age voters, but their high powered, college town voter turnout operations are only made possible by an avalanche of mail-in ballots, and the presence of, well-funded, data driven election activists in university towns who know how to mobilize them.



Suburban and exurban areas, where voters of diverse party affiliation live in proximity to one another, or rural areas, where population is more widely dispersed, do not lend themselves to the mass distribution and harvesting of mail-in ballots for partisan purposes. This reduces the impact of conventional voters who live in these areas in statewide elections with mass mail-in voting.

On the other hand, vast new powers flow to process-oriented election activists and the nonprofits that fund them. Since their power is based on the mass distribution and harvesting of mail-in ballots, the political impact of the geographically concentrated, partisan voting blocs they target also increases.

James E. Campbell notes something similar in considering the “unintended consequences” of the spread of mail in voting in 2022, and his observations are worth quoting at length:

*As intended, [the move toward mass mail in voting in 2022] made voting more convenient for many voters, but it also unintentionally has made big mobilization operations much more possible and has made the “big money” funding these operations even more important than it had been. Although voters are unlikely to be aware of it, **easy and early mail-in voting is at the expense of voters who care enough to expend some effort to vote by conventional means** (emphasis added). Their votes are less important to election outcomes than before.*



It is important to note that when the emphasis in elections shifts from motivating conventional voters to chasing mail-in ballots, we have entered a qualitatively different electoral world than the one we inhabited before.

There is a substantive difference between mail-in ballots and conventional votes, which means that there are fundamentally different election systems operating in parallel with one another to determine outcomes in many states. The most important difference is that mail-in ballot distribution and collection is far more susceptible to manipulation by outside influences than conventional votes cast at polling places.

In elections in which mail-in voting plays a decisive role, the initiative of election activists, tech firms, and the nonprofits of the Democrats’ Election-Industrial Complex play the dominant role in determining elections. Under conventional, in-person voting, it is the initiative and rational faculties of individual voters that drive election outcomes. This is a critically important distinction.

Elections won on the basis of mail-in voting and ballot harvesting tell us far more about the ingenuity and logistical efficiency of ballot harvesters and election activists, than about candidate quality, voter enthusiasm, voter policy preferences, and whether voters are persuaded by political messaging.



It is important to understand that there have been recent exceptions to the vote-by-mail “Republican Killing Death Star” rule, especially in states that have maintained more conservative voting rules. The principle that underlies those rules is that fair and secure elections must not be sacrificed on the altar of “convenience,” or an expansive conception

of “voting rights” that envisions a bespoke voting experience tailored to the preferences of the most disengaged, apathetic “unlikely” voters in the general population.

States like Tennessee and Texas, which limit the use of mail-in ballots, greatly reduce the impact of Democrats’ mail-in ballot mobilization efforts on elections. In other words, the key to destroying the Republican killing “Democratic Deathstar” is to restrict the use of mail-in ballots to registered voters who have a legitimate reason for not voting in person.

Despite the wishful thinking of some Republicans, demographics, financial constraints, and the lack of deep institutional support will make it virtually impossible for Republicans to mount their own ballot harvesting operations to counter the lavishly funded, finely tuned Democratic machine.

Pushing back against the radical transformation of elections through mail-in voting is therefore a very big deal. As Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton suggested in [a recent interview](#) with Tucker Carlson, Donald Trump was “one lawsuit away” from losing Texas in 2020, as Democratic lawyers tried to open the state up to mass mail-in voting.

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If Paxton had not been successful in countering attempts by Democrats to send unsolicited absentee ballot applications to every voter, and install private ballot drop boxes [in the heavily Democratic Texas counties of Harris \(Houston\), and Travis \(Austin\)](#) in 2020, it is likely that Trump would have lost the state.

Republicans must make a concerted effort to better understand the pernicious logic of mass mail-in voting, to mount an “all hands on deck” legislative and lawfare effort to counter its spread, and push for a return to conventional, time-tested election norms.

Mass mail-in voting is not a voting rights matter. It is a matter of greatly expanding the power of leftist nonprofits and partisan election activists to manipulate elections and

determine outcomes. Elections should reflect the will of actual voters, rather than the agendas of partisan nonprofit donors, and the fetishes of well funded election activists.

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