

Trump's Lies and Chicanery Threaten to Sow Election Mayhem

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Introduction

This paper examines leading concerns about the integrity of midterm and 2028 elections that are rampant among Americans today. From the lies about non-citizen voting and mail ballot fraud to the refusal to let go of the false claims that the 2020 election was stolen, indeed continued “investigations” of that election, American trust in our election systems is being deliberately undermined. Trump threatens to nationalize elections (which the constitution makes the province of the states and Congress) and even intimates that he might send ICE or other armed personnel to election sites (which is outright illegal). Fear and distrust not only depress voting (why go if it puts you in harm’s way, why bother if it is all manipulated and unreliable), they also give a veneer of legitimacy to new assertions of stolen elections if Trump loses his grip on power.

While MAGA Republicans seem fearful of the specter of non-citizen voters (already illegal and extremely rare), Trump’s opponents worry about unprecedented federal interference in elections; depressed voter turnout as a result of a deliberately heightened atmosphere of fear; voter intimidation, most prominently via the deployment of ICE agents or other armed personnel during voting; and voter suppression including via such controversial legislation as the [SAVE Act](#).

Overall, election anxiety seems to have reached critical levels.

What follows is a selected litany of election fears, largely the fears of Trump opponents. But it starts by pointing out that voting by non-citizens is vanishingly rare and has been utterly insignificant to election outcomes. Then, using Colorado as an exemplar, it shows the safety of a state-run voting system that depends heavily on mail ballots. Those two bugbears, non-citizen voting and mail ballots, are the justifications Trump offers for his attempts at unprecedented federal election intervention.

Other questions remain including: Will Trump attempt to “nationalize” the midterms or 2028 elections? Will ICE or other armed personnel be deployed to crucial election venues? What moves will the election deniers now staffing federal agencies make? Will Trump declare yet another “national emergency” as grounds for election interference yet to come? Fortunately some protections are in place to prevent these illegal attempts but we all must remain vigilant.

The Constitution Protects Us

The Constitution is [clear](#). Authority for setting election rules and administering elections lies with the states, absent congressional intervention. There is absolutely no reference to nationalized elections, no mention of presidential power at all in the Constitution. Given that silence, claimed executive branch authority would have to come from a law by which Congress gave the authority to the executive. There has been no such law. American election administration remains extremely decentralized, as constitutionally intended. Fifty states and multitudes of local officials (in Colorado, for example, the secretary of state and the county clerks in each of our 64 counties) are the responsible parties, not the federal government.

Non-Citizen Voting Is a Made-up Problem

As [Peter Baker](#) of the New York Times recently indicated, “Fact checking fraud claims: Heritage Foundation documented 1,620 cases of voter fraud from 1982-2025, including 100 cases of noncitizens voting. That's about 0.000008% of more than 1.3 billion votes cast in presidential elections in that time.” That’s the conclusion of the [Heritage Foundation](#), creator of Project 2025. Similar findings are abundant.

[A recent report](#) from the nonpartisan Center for Election Innovation and Research found that many claims of noncitizen voting stem from “misunderstandings, mischaracterizations, or outright fabrications about complex voter data.” The report highlighted a [2025 voter roll audit by Michigan’s Department of State](#), which found that of the 7.2 million active registered voters on the state’s rolls, there were only 16 instances of suspected noncitizens who cast a ballot in the 2024 presidential election. Other states, [including Louisiana](#) and Utah, recently conducted audits of their voter rolls and found few incidents of noncitizen voting or voter registration. Utah, for example, performed a [citizenship review of its entire voter registration list](#) from April 2025 through January 2026. After a time-intensive, multi-step review of more than 2 million registered voters, Utah identified only one confirmed instance of noncitizen registration and zero instances of noncitizen voting.

Colorado’s Experience with Mail Ballots and Election Safety Is a Prime Example of the Security of State-Run Systems

The president repeatedly makes the claim that mail ballots are unsafe and allow cheating. His allegations create a miasma of fear around what many states, prominently Colorado, have found to be a simple, safe, and almost universally adopted method of voting. Mail ballots are preferable to in-person voting in cost, ease, and security, says [John Hickenlooper](#), who signed Colorado's 2013 mail ballot statute. Over 92% of Colorado voters sent in mail ballots for the 2024 election. Both Republican and Democratic county clerks, who run Colorado’s elections,

are strong advocates (note that former Mesa County Clerk Tina Peters focused on voting machines, not mail ballots). They also anticipate large costs and considerable difficulty if there were a return to an in-person voting mandate, as Trump would have it.

As to overall election safety, Colorado is a prime example of how states can and do impose systems upon systems to assure the integrity of their elections and check the machinery with which they are run. According to the Colorado County Clerks Association, there are “multiple layers that protect the sanctity of each voter’s ballot.” The Clerks Association [summarizes](#) those systems as follows:

All election equipment is under strict access control with only a few individuals who receive background checks able to enter the rooms Equipment can’t be remotely accessed. No election tabulating equipment is connected to the internet. . . . Equipment is under 24/7 video monitoring. . . . We test equipment before each election and the results are public. . . . Coloradans vote on paper ballots. ... If the digital tally registered by the voting equipment does not match the hard copy of the vote, the discrepancy would be clear. We publicly audit election results. After each election, every county clerk conducts a public audit of the election results, matching the digital record to the hardcopy ballots on a randomly selected number of candidate contests and issues. [R]esults are available to the public for review.

Colorado Secretary of State, Jena Griswold, told a [recent gathering](#) of Indivisible groups that her team has already mapped out responses to a wide variety of potential election interference. Some were plans she did not detail publicly, but she did talk about such basic changes as pending legislation that would require ballots to be mailed sooner and drop boxes to be opened earlier for 2026.

Trump’s Statements and Actions Have Fomented Fear But We Can Fight Back

The following actions have contributed to the fear and anxiety surrounding the election process this year.

Relying on False Claims of Illegal Voters and Fraud through Mail Ballots, Trump Has Asserted Power over Registration and Voting through Executive Orders. In 2025, Trump entered an executive order (EO) focused on voter registration. Courts struck it down as unconstitutional on the grounds that the president lacks the authority to change election procedures; only the states and Congress have such power. But on March 31, 2026, Trump tried again, this time targeting his two hobgoblins together, **non-citizen voters and voting by mail**. His order required state voting administrators to include new ballot envelopes with unique ballot

identifiers such as bar codes, on pain of losing federal funds. He ordered the Secretary of Homeland Security to compile a citizenship list using federal records and databases that would be sent to each state's chief election officer. He instructed the Postal Service to send mail ballots only to voters on that list. This EO will undoubtedly meet with strong legal challenges. Already, a [multistate lawsuit](#), including Colorado, has attacked its legality. It is also impractical, certainly for the November elections. Federal databases are widely regarded as incomplete and inaccurate. The Postal Service is financially burdened and not designed to be an election enforcement agency.

For an excellent description and dissection of the executive order, listen to a short [April 8 interview](#) on CPR with Matt Crane, Republican former clerk of Arapahoe County and current head of the Colorado County Clerks Association. Crane calls the order "performative politics" that goes way beyond the president's power and says the clerks would "appreciate if [the feds] stayed in their lane and we'll keep doing a good job in ours." He notes that Colorado already does much of what Trump's order would demand and does it far better than the federal government could do.

Of course, this latest EO may be as much about adding to the climate of national election anxiety as it is about its mandate actually coming to pass. You can just hear Trump's refrain: "State voter rolls are riddled with non-citizen voters! States permit mail ballots that are vehicles for fraud and cheating! Only I can fix it! If rogue courts stop me, elections will continue to be corrupt!"

These efforts line up with the Trump administration's gutting of the federal Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, which previously helped state and local officials prepare for on-line threats, misinformation, and violence that could affect election outcomes. As Adrian Flores, [Arizona's secretary of state](#) put it, "We no longer have a partner. It feels like we have an adversary, and that's not a healthy way to govern."

Over a Drumbeat of All-Caps Rhetoric Alleging Fraud and Cheating, Trump Has Threatened to Deploy Forces, Nationalize Elections, and Even Call a National Emergency to Justify Attempted Federal Interference in Midterm Elections. Donald Trump has powerful incentives to do everything he can to assure election wins. If the Democrats take control of one or both of the houses of Congress in the midterms, they can stall his agenda, launch effective oversight of his and his administration's behavior, and even undertake another impeachment effort – maybe the third time would be the charm.

So he has changed the rules and corrupted the context. He has significantly altered the ground by engineering mid-cycle partisan redistricting. He has made it easier for misinformation and disinformation to circulate widely (they are his primary approaches to communication, after all) by loosening social media companies' moderation. He has manipulated the information ecosystem by bullying "unfriendly" media and entertainment companies, and he's overseen the take-over of major media players by more compliant owners.

Given Trump's history regarding the 2020 election and his machinations in anticipation of the upcoming elections, given the violence and killing that accompanied the ICE operations in Minneapolis, and given Republican fears of imminent significant losses, is it any wonder that voters worry that ICE agents or even the military could be sent to American polls in November? After all, Trump's ally Steve Bannon said in March that the deployment of ICE to airports is "[perfect training](#)" for the fall of 2026.

Sending ICE or other armed federal officers to polling places is illegal. [Federal statute](#) makes it a crime punishable by up to five years in prison to deploy federal "troops or armed men" to any location where voting is taking place or elections are being held, unless "such force be necessary to repel armed enemies of the United States." [Another statute](#) makes it a crime for a member of the armed forces to prevent someone from voting "by force, threat, intimidation, advice, or otherwise," or to interfere "in any manner with an election officer's discharge of his duties." [Federal law](#) also bans other federal agents or employees from interfering in elections, making it a crime for "a person employed in any administrative position by the United States, or by any department or agency thereof," to use their "official authority for the purpose of interfering with, or affecting" a federal election.

Deploying ICE would be so extreme and in such stark contrast to law that some speculate about the reality of the threats. If the administration were to use armed agents, it might be not at voting places specifically or on election day precisely. Armed officers might be spread more generally, arriving earlier and remaining in targeted cities. Targets would likely be large blue cities with significant minority populations. Or perhaps his threats are less real than they are a part of his campaign to increase fear and doubt and intimidate voters. *[In any event, like election officials in other states, Colorado's Secretary of State affirms that her office, the Office of the Attorney General, and the Governor's Office are all preparing for even this contingency.](#)*

Voter intimidation has long been a [crime](#) in Colorado. Last year Colorado enacted a law further protecting voters and voting officials from intimidation and creating a [presumption](#) that anyone carrying a visible firearm in such situations is engaged in intimidation. Several other Democratic

[states are considering laws](#) that ban immigration enforcement near polling places and other election sites.

Senator Mark Warner (D-VA), vice-chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, recently [sounded a call](#) for vigilance by Congress, state election officials, lawyers, the media, and the public over Trump's possible attempt to justify federal interference in the midterms by declaring a national emergency:

*I fear that foreign interference is no longer the most pressing danger to our elections. It is increasingly evident that the greatest threat now comes from inside our own government. For months, President Trump has made his intentions clear. He has called for the federal government to "take over" elections, impose national rules and override state authority. Now we are beginning to see how he may plan to do this. According to recent reporting in The Washington Post, allies of Mr. Trump's, working in coordination with people close to the White House, have circulated a draft executive order that would declare a national emergency based on false claims of foreign interference in the 2020 election. That declaration would be used to unlock sweeping presidential powers over how Americans vote. . . Further steps could be justified, at least on paper, by invoking emergency powers. The president could also attempt to seize voting machines under the guise of a national security investigation. Federal agents could be deployed to polling places in the name of election integrity, intimidating voters rather than protecting them. Entire categories of lawful ballots could be seized or discarded based on unsubstantiated claims of interference. There is no legitimate basis for such an emergency. That is not the point. The point is that **the Trump administration could manufacture an impression of an emergency, creating a pretext for intervention.***

To counter this threat, Congress must assert its constitutional role, rejecting efforts to take over elections and conducting oversight. State and local officials must hold the line. Republicans have a particular duty to speak out. Lawyers must be prepared to challenge any "emergency" interference, and to do so quickly, so that courts can remain a bulwark. Former intelligence and law enforcement officials must speak if they see intelligence being manipulated or misused. Political observers must subject any "emergency" election interference to rigorous scrutiny and label it frankly as being as illegal and unconstitutional as it would be. Most of all, Americans must remain vigilant and vocal that a made-up emergency to justify taking over elections is utterly unsupportable.

[Trump Has Positioned Election Deniers in Powerful Federal Roles from Which They Can Poison Trust and Interfere with Upcoming Elections.](#) When Trump sought to overturn the results of the 2020 election and retain power, an important part of what stymied him was resistance from

inside his own administration – from high officials at DOJ, DHS, cybersecurity agencies, intelligence services. This time is different. He is geared up, with loyal election deniers in crucial federal positions, the Department of Justice and the FBI as engines of his directives, and ICE apparently at his beck and call. Others teed up to do his bidding include Kash Patel at the FBI; acting Attorney General Todd Blanche; Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard; Harmeet Dhillon leading the DOJ's civil rights division; Heather Honey in the Trump-created position of deputy assistant secretary for election integrity at DHS; and Kurt Olsen now in the White House as a special government employee (re-, re-)investigating the 2020 election. These are only some of the more prominent figures who sympathize with the baseless 2020 stolen election claims and feed suspicions about the integrity of American elections.

Some of the actions taken by these loyalists and responses to them are outlined below.

- [**Attempts to Compile a National Voter Database.**](#) Harmeet Dhillon's Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice has filed [**30 lawsuits demanding that DC and 29 states, including Colorado,**](#) turn over their voter rolls, including full names, birth dates, addresses and driver's license numbers or partial Social Security numbers. At least four federal judges hearing the cases dismissed them. DOJ appealed the dismissals. OK settled and the other cases remain in litigation. The demands to hand over all this sensitive data are unprecedented, overreaching, and in many cases violate state laws. Though some red states have cooperated with the demand, both red and blue states have resisted, including Colorado.

Although the administration claims it needs this information to ensure that American elections are not polluted by non-citizen voters, it is states that have the responsibility and the systems to assure that their voter lists are clean and maintained. State voting rolls are living documents, changing minute by minute because people turn 18, people move, get married, or die. The federal government is neither authorized nor set up to undertake such list maintenance. Judges have been wary, if not downright disbelieving. The [**judge in Oregon**](#) was particularly candid, noting concerns about the government's "ulterior motives" and opining that the "presumption of regularity that . . . [the DOJ] could be taken at its word — with little doubt about its intentions and stated purposes — no longer holds."

Moreover, a [**DOJ attorney recently acknowledged**](#) in the case against Rhode Island that his department intends to share the voter rolls with the Department of Homeland Security for immigration and criminal investigations. DHS houses a controversial citizenship look-up database, Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE), that it has urged states to use. Some, including TX and LA, have voluntarily run their voter

rolls through SAVE. Their comparisons identified a small number of non-citizens, in line with the findings of state-level reviews, and also falsely identified US citizens as lacking citizenship. Matt Crane, the Republican former Arapahoe County clerk, called the SAVE database “notoriously unreliable.”

- **[Stolen Election Claims Continue to Be Pushed by Seizing 2020 Ballots from Georgia and Arizona and Voting Machines from Puerto Rico.](#)** In January 2026, the FBI seized ballots from the 2020 election in Fulton County, Georgia (Atlanta). The 2026 Georgia seizure began with a “referral” from Kurt Olsen, the election denier now working as the White House’s director of election security and integrity. Director of National Intelligence, Tulsi Gabbard, was also present at the Fulton County FBI search and reportedly organized a phone call between FBI agents and President Trump. Her presence raises questions about her involvement. Gabbard’s office has no role in domestic law enforcement. There have already been at least nine legal challenges by Trump and his allies to the 2020 election in Georgia. They were all either dropped or denied or dismissed by judges. Why reopen the matter?

On March 5, 2026, the President of the AZ Senate turned over ballots and other material from the 2020 election in Maricopa County (Phoenix) to the FBI pursuant to a subpoena in a criminal investigation. After the 2020 election showed President Biden won AZ, the AZ Senate hired a company called CyberNinjas to “audit” the election so the Senate had the material the FBI sought. The “audit” **found no evidence of widespread voter fraud** and, in fact, concluded that **Joe Biden defeated Trump by more votes** than the official tally had found. What is the purpose of reexamining the election?

In May 2025 the Office of the Director of National Intelligence seized voting machines and other election material from Puerto Rico. Director Tulsi Gabbard has testified that the seizure was pursuant to a request by Puerto Rico’s US Attorney, but she did not mention that he has been the center of a push by Trump supporters to revive a long discredited conspiracy theory purporting to link **[Venezuela and its alleged control of voting machines worldwide](#)** to Trump’s 2020 electoral defeat. Among other evidence that the Venezuela conspiracy theory is untrue is that Fox Corporation and its news network conceded its falsity in the defamation lawsuit brought against them by Dominion Voting Systems, the maker of the machines. That lawsuit was settled by Fox paying Dominion over \$787 million dollars.

Conclusion

In the face of all this, what do we do? We work and we resist. Educate ourselves and our friends and families about the illegality of what Trump and his allies are doing and threatening. Recognize that he perpetually traffics in bombast and hyperbole and outright falsehoods. Understand the strategy of creating fear, distrust, and doubt so as to depress voter turnout. Most of all, turn out to vote in large numbers so that whatever they try will not be enough to deprive us of our right to “throw the scoundrels out” with our votes. ***Our government rests on the consent of the people and we the people must make it clear beyond question that we withdraw that consent from Trump and his loyalists!***