

Working Together for New Jersey
- Election Integrity -
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Policy Statement

Bringing Election Integrity to New Jersey

PARSIPPANY – The *Working Together for New Jersey Election Integrity* coalition has released its 15-point policy statement on ways to improve New Jersey’s conduct of elections. The purpose of the policy statement is to urge serious and immediate reconsideration of existing policies and procedures related to the conduct of elections in New Jersey. This needs to be a priority conversation, considering the many flaws, opportunities for manipulation and almost total absence of any audits – especially in the machine/electronic/internet/centralized tabulation aspects of “counting” votes. If the average citizen cannot understand and trust the process and rules and if the “electronics” are not audited and publicly examined regularly and in a transparent fashion, which they are not, then our process is too complex and subject to manipulation.

Overview - *WTNJ – Election Integrity is a nonpartisan coalition of citizens. We are concerned about the integrity of the election process, voter rolls, systems, procedures, and administrative structures which work together to conduct and tabulate elections in New Jersey. Our election system should be as simple, transparent and objective as possible while providing equal protection to every qualified voter.*

1. Paper Ballots & Local Tabulation of Votes

We believe there is strong evidence of systemic problems in electronic voting machines and interconnections through the internet. No one has proven this yet, because government contracts with machine and systems vendors prevent access for any full forensic audit. We believe we should return to a simple, manual, verifiable paper ballot process to save money and improve public trust.

We also believe the initial counting of votes should be done manually at the voting district level immediately following the close of the polls, and then immediately be publicly posted. Again – the problem is that the electronic components and connections of “machines” such as tabulators can not be examined by auditors to prove that no manipulation of counts takes place. (Think of the car maker which programmed their auto electronics to “report” satisfactory emissions, but the computer then did entirely different things to make the car perform better. In other words, fraud. The same can be done with any machine, tabulator, voting machine or other system – and the public can NOT audit any of it. Neither can elections officials, given current contract standards.)

Conducting an immediate manual count of paper ballots and posting results immediately would make subsequent manipulation of votes very obvious and difficult. It would also provide greater assurance to voters that their vote was counted as they intended. New Jersey's structure is perfect for this: each voting district, by law, is to represent between 250 and 750 voters. It doesn't take long to tabulate 750 votes. This change would also eliminate the different rules (and systems) that can be in operation in different counties. It would also save millions of dollars in equipment, and likely produce much faster tabulation of key election results.

2. Citizenship Verification

We believe that every legally qualified person should have the right to vote. The Constitutions of the United States and New Jersey restrict voting eligibility to "Citizens." The ability to choose your elected representatives is one of the foremost privileges of citizenship. But for many decades, New Jersey and many other states have *not* verified the Citizenship of persons registering to vote. Therefore, we believe each person seeking to vote should be required to demonstrate Citizenship at the polls or in advance of any election, so their voter registration can be updated to document Citizenship – and so that the vote of those who are legally qualified is not diluted by those who are not legally eligible.

3. A Fresh Start

Our state and federal legislatures have made what should be a strait-forward and understandable process overwhelmingly complex and convoluted. Our elections officials are overwhelmed by conflicting, confusing rules that often change. Current federal laws require keeping names on the voter rolls for up to 5 years after evidence exists that a voter has moved. Governors have abused emergency powers to completely change election systems. All of this decays public confidence in the most basic civic activity of the people: their vote. A very strong argument can be made that we should delete the entire voter registration, and start fresh with everyone being required to register again.

4. Voter ID

To protect the value of the vote for every legally qualified voter, we believe it is important to promote and institute a basic program to verify the legal qualification of each voter. The historic signature verification process is not workable and is widely disregarded. We do not advocate for biometrics. Arguments that voter ID is discriminatory are false, as we require ID to buy cigarettes, airplane tickets, antihistamines, prescription drugs and to drive a car. Those who want an election system that can be abused oppose voter identification.

5. Absentee & "Mail-in Ballots"

The use of absentee and mail-in ballots should be restricted to *Specific Requests* by voters, *unique to each election*, and should not be a widespread or automatic voting method. There are legitimate needs for an ability for military members stationed away from home, the disabled, those on work assignments out of town, etc., to have the ability to "absentee" vote. We should revert to the old system where voters must specifically request and sign for such a mail-in ballot. This should not be widespread or routine for the vast majority of voters. The opportunities for coercion, fraud, misuse and external influence are too great.

6. End Acceptance of Ballots After the Polls Close

Many legislatures, and New Jersey, have changed the rules to allow receipt of ballots days AFTER the close of the polls. To prevent election manipulation from “ballots received after election day,” rules should be changed to count only those ballots *received* by the close of polls on Election Day (before anyone knows vote counts), with no exceptions.

7. End “Early Counting”

Present laws allow mailed-in ballots and ballots deposited in drop-boxes to be counted BEFORE election day. These early counts get wide distribution – and by showing trends, can lead to questionable or illegal actions to boost votes for candidates whose count is low. Out of fairness and to avoid ballot manipulation, *no results should be counted or posted* before ALL votes are counted and posted.

8. Voter Registration

We believe that persons not currently registered but who wish to vote in any election should be required to document their citizenship and register at least 30 days in advance of that election, to allow time for accurate processing and verification of their voter registration data.

“Same day registration” and other forms of last-minute registration significantly increase the potential for fraud and deny election officials time to accurately process registration information.

9. The States and Counties Should Control All Voter Registration Systems & Data Locally

At present, the State Voter Registration database is maintained, programmed, stored and manipulated off site by a commercial vendor. It is subject – out of view – to all sorts of external influence. We should change the law to require the State to operate and maintain its voter registration database locally, and officials should be assigned, by name, and made legally and criminally liable for any manipulation of the system – we need to hold people accountable. It should be illegal to allow an offsite software company to manage and retain control over voter registration information. Similarly, no funding should be accepted from outsiders who can influence the State’s systems.

10. Observation & Transparency

The right-to-vote, and the need for the public to be able to validate that election procedures are properly followed require that registered voters have the right at all times to observe all election procedures – and not be limited to New Jersey’s past restrictive “challenger” procedures. We believe ANY registered voter should have the right to observe (and this should not be restricted to candidate or political party appointees). This absolute right to observe should extend to the right to audit (below), and laws should be changed to prohibit any contract which prohibits, prevents or obscures analysis and audit of the schema, firmware, software or data instructions and storage systems, and interconnections and external access to, elections databases, voting machines, tabulation machines, optical scanners and any and all other equipment or mechanisms used in the collection, storage, maintenance or operation of elections data. But our preference, noted above, is for paper ballots and local manual tabulation at the close of polls.

11. Ability to Audit

Only those contracts, procedures and voting methods which allow observation and full forensic audit should be allowed. Use of electronic voting and tabulation machines should be immediately stopped, in part because government contracts with manufacturers preclude inspection of most of the mechanics, firmware, software, programming, and monitoring of the use of any equipment interconnections (wired, wireless, optical or by any other means). Every activity and computer action related to voter registration, qualification, voter rolls, the conduct of voting, vote tabulation, conveyance of results and all other aspects of voting should have the means, approved by Certified Public Accountants and Auditors, for each action to be audited and verified after the fact. Every procedure and action should be subject to public audit. Every document, transmission and recorded/memory item should be securely retained for audit for at least 22 months following any election, and specific individuals should be assigned by name with responsibility to assure this security, and be subject to personal criminal charges for failure to protect the security of these items.

12. Drop Boxes

We believe drop boxes should be strictly limited to the lobbies of public government buildings, in well lit areas with nearby parking, and allowed only when under 24-hour video and audio surveillance which the public can view in real time. Surveillance equipment should be monitored and recorded, available as open public records upon request, and any interruption of surveillance should result in immediate (within 15 minutes of interruption) closure of the lobby and drop box involved.

13. Duration of “an Election”; Early Voting

The purpose of conducting elections on a single “election day” was and is to reduce opportunities for abuse of the election process. We favor eliminating early or “advance” voting, except for absentee ballots as described above or in person only at the office of each county clerk.

14. Ballot Harvesting

“Ballot Harvesting” is a term used to describe various election policies, rules and laws which allow political parties to go door-to-door to the homes of voters, especially AFTER the close of polls, to solicit votes. Often, such policies invite intimidation tactics or manipulation of the elderly and voters who are not well informed. Ballot Harvesting should not be allowed.

15. The Issue of “Phantom Voters”

Various federal laws, court opinions, and state policies currently require that the name of a registered voter remain on the voter rolls for up to 5 years after indications exist that the person has moved. Such rules only exist to invite mischief in voting. Every election official in New Jersey fully knows about these rules; most object to them, but must follow the law. The laws should be changed to allow for immediate removal of a voter’s name from the registration books once a formal verification process provides evidence of a move or death. Notice of the removal should be sent to the last known address. As above, provision should be made so that any legally qualified voter can re-register easily and quickly, at least 30 days in advance of the election, by providing evidence of Citizenship and current residency. This change would end the issue of “Phantom Votes” – a vote cast in the name of a “voter” who has not voted recently and likely no longer lives at the listed residence.