

## OPINION

## The GOP Must Address Election Integrity Before It Is Too Late | Opinion

**PAUL DU QUENOY**, PRESIDENT, PALM BEACH FREEDOM INSTITUTE

ON 11/22/22 AT 6:30 AM EST



*Website Source* = <https://www.newsweek.com/gop-must-address-election-integrity-before-it-too-late-opinion-1761096>

**O**n a rare visit to my Washington, D.C. place shortly before the midterm elections, an envelope in my large pile of mail read, "Official Ballot." Inside, I found a full ballot and postage-paid envelope to ensure that my voice could be counted in District of Columbia elections. No identification or authentication was required.

It was heartwarming to know that the local election authorities were looking out for me, but I have not lived in the nation's capital for any sustained period since 2005 and have never requested an absentee ballot there. I am registered to vote, liable for jury duty, and licensed to drive, hunt, fish, and carry concealed weapons in Florida, where I first voted in 1996.

Since I am not a criminal, I discarded my D.C. ballot and duly cast only one vote, in person at my local fire station in Palm Beach. In this, I mirrored many other registered Republicans, who typically vote in person on election day in much larger numbers than do Democrats.

This is only one person's anecdote of failed election integrity, but those who allege the potential for abuse in mass mail-in balloting, ballot harvesting, large-scale absentee voting, and similar techniques often introduced during or just before the COVID-19

pandemic are routinely castigated as "racists," "fascists," "conspiracy theorists," and evildoers nefariously determined to "undermine the integrity of our elections" and threaten "Democracy Itself™."

Ostensibly intended to guarantee voting rights by removing perceived obstacles to reaching physical polling places, these broad and worryingly unsupervised measures have remained in effect in many states even as the pandemic has receded. Only a handful of state governments have walked some of these measures back to ensure that our elections are indeed determined by votes that count, rather than by those who count the votes.

After the 2020 elections, concerns about election integrity received little practical attention. Mainstream media disparaged even broaching the issue, and doing so became publicly taboo. It's easy to understand why: Any challenge to the loosened system could have delegitimized the defeat of former President Donald J. Trump and imperiled future Democratic electoral success.

The federal courts almost uniformly punted legal challenges on the bases of jurisdiction or standing, which excused them from engagement with the underlying substantive issues. As it so mendaciously did with public health policy, Big Tech systematically banned or flagged dissenting posts, accounts, and even hashtags (e.g., "#StopTheSteal") suggesting the 2020 elections reflected anything other than democracy in its purest and most unadulterated form. With those few state-level exceptions, Republican leaders largely went along with this narrative. Nobody likes to be called a racist, fascist, or conspiracy theorist—especially not bow-tied Washingtonians worried about their cocktail party invitations.

In 2022, however, the narrative fell apart. Under Governor [Ron DeSantis's leadership](#), Florida had outlawed mass mail-in voting, ballot harvesting, and the use of funds offered by possibly biased third-party actors (e.g. "Zuckerbucks") to help operate local elections. It also required photo identification to vote and vowed to prosecute individuals who allegedly violated state election laws. Criticism rained down on the governor before and after the election, but the results were undeniable as the "red wave" predicted for the entire country slammed Florida's shores. DeSantis won reelection by 19 points, and similar margins of victory blessed Republican candidates down the ballot. Importantly,

these numbers reasonably resembled pre-election polling data, taking into account the advantage of a few points that polling often inaccurately assigns to Democrats. What's more, the Sunshine State's 7.2 million total votes cast were counted within a mere five hours.

Compare with Arizona, where the state election system, which was questioned heavily in 2020, experienced few meaningful changes since that year. Additionally, the state's chief election official, Secretary of State Katie Hobbs, was also the state's 2022 Democratic gubernatorial candidate. Hobbs's Republican opponent [Kari Lake](#) asked her to recuse herself, as numerous irregularities manifested around election day. These included the reported malfunction of over 20% of voting machines in Republican-leaning areas of decisive Maricopa County, as well as the state's general inability to tabulate all ballots for many days, even as almost all other states completed their own counts. Hobbs refused to step aside. The final results, which showed Lake and Republican U.S. [Senate](#) candidate Blake Masters both losing, while many other Arizona Republicans on the ballot won, left additional doubts in many minds about the integrity of the outcome.

More analysis could be done and more evidence could be gathered, but the upshot is this: Florida's reformed system delivered results that no one doubts, while Arizona's largely unreformed system delivered results that many mistrust. That fact alone is highly problematic for faith in the democracy we all share, regardless of which party benefited.

What is to be done? Constitutionally, each state manages its own elections. No law passed by [Congress](#) can force states to adopt the superior Florida model, revert to the problematic Arizona variant, or do anything else. To safeguard Our Democracy™, state-level Republicans should work diligently to reform election laws to ensure that we have accurate, qualified, and verified electorates that cannot be thwarted by procedural blind spots. In states where Republicans hold legislative majorities, this process can begin tomorrow and should be motivated by the cautionary tale of Michigan, whose Republican-controlled legislature did virtually nothing to address the issue after 2020 and now finds itself controlled by Democrats.

In other states, Republican minorities should reach out to Democrats who are honest enough to admit there are structural problems and wise enough to see that unsecured and easily manipulated processes could be turned against them if Republican activists get into the mail-in and ballot harvesting business, as many are now promising to do.

For its part, the new Republican-controlled U.S. House of Representatives must prioritize the Electoral Count Reform Act, a heretofore stagnant piece of legislation designed to modernize the thoroughly outdated Electoral Count Act of 1887, which prescribes how state votes are to be tabulated and verified in presidential elections.

Barring a legislative solution, legal action could also prevail in federal courts with the power to require states to abandon election practices that are fraudulent, discriminatory, or otherwise fail to secure constitutionally guaranteed equal protection. Like so many other issues affecting our polity—from abortion to gun rights to affirmative action—election integrity may ultimately be a matter for the Supreme Court to decide.

Time will tell whether Republicans have the organizational skill, attention span, or courage to take on these dull and difficult tasks in the branches of government where they still have a say. But if they don't, they will become a permanent minority party in most states that don't start with "F," and much of the Union will become a banana republic.

*Paul du Quenoy is president of the Palm Beach Freedom Institute.*

###

*Source:*

<https://www.newsweek.com/gop-must-address-election-integrity-before-it-too-late-opinion-1761096>