

THE TOP 10 ELECTION THREATS

How the Executive Branch Can Threaten Our Vote in 2026—And *What We Can Do About It*

February 2026

The federal government is attempting to keep Americans from voting and eligible votes from counting by overstepping its authority in an attempt to seize power. The threats it undertakes now could have far-reaching and permanent consequences. They also create a permission structure for future anti-voting measures at the local, state, and federal level. Because elections officials work year-round, we must act now to ensure that every voter can cast a ballot with the confidence that it will be counted.

As part of an ongoing and dangerous strategy, election deniers led by the Trump administration are abusing power and supporting executive branch intrusion in ways that could harm the ability of state and local election officials to count our votes and certify elections. These efforts to foster distrust in elections and ultimately silence voters should not be normalized.

As such, this assessment serves to identify the multi-pronged attack from the executive branch and many states on the freedom to vote that specifically targets Black, Brown, Native American, and other historically excluded voters, including women, military and overseas voters, and voters with disabilities. It also seeks to outline steps that can be taken now, by elections officials, activists, and voters, to protect all Americans' access to the ballot.



1

Federal Takeover of Elections

Problem: The Executive Branch seeks to run elections. This intrusion in local elections is not normal, and it should never be.

Demand: Elections should remain in the hands of trusted local officials and poll workers—neighbors who know their communities.

Background: The current administration, its allies, and federal lawmakers continue with efforts to advance interference in free and fair elections in the United States. From the President’s executive order on elections signed in March 2025 to federal agency requests for state voter files to targeting election officials and nonprofit organizations that protect voters and elections, these efforts create permission structures to ultimately silence voters and to take away power from the election officials who can effectively and safely administer elections.

2

Burdensome Citizenship Documentation to Register to Vote

Problem: Calls to force “show your papers” requirements to vote are xenophobic, unnecessary, and perpetuate lies about immigrants. They will prevent eligible Americans from voting.

Demand: Voters should be able to register and vote easily and safely, without having to show their papers. States, and not the federal government, must set and communicate commonsense rules about voter eligibility.

Background: Requiring voters to obtain and produce birth certificates, passports, and other specific documents to prove their U.S. citizenship when they register or update registration information to vote creates unnecessary barriers for eligible Americans, including older voters, rural voters, military and overseas voters, college students, trans and nonbinary voters, and voters of color. Millions of Americans don’t have access to the specific documents that the Trump administration is demanding as proof of citizenship. Voters should be able to register and vote without having to repeatedly locate, obtain, and produce documents proving eligibility—especially when they are already required to swear under penalty of perjury that they are U.S. citizens before registering and voting. States, not the president, set and communicate rules about voter eligibility that are subject to federal civil rights laws and the U.S. Constitution.



3

Federal Demands of Voter Data that Threaten Privacy

Problem: The Department of Justice is demanding voter data from states yet it has no role in collecting or verifying the quality of state election data nor data about voters.

Demand: Voters' data privacy is paramount; voter rolls must be managed by trusted state and local officials using best practices—not federal agencies.

Background: The federal government's unprecedented collection of state voter registration data poses major data security and privacy risks for voters and election administration. Relying on incompatible, unreliable, and/or out-of-date federal databases to try and "verify" voters' eligibility risks disenfranchising eligible voters. Voters' data privacy and the security and reliability of our voter registration records are paramount. The administration's attempt to quickly and irresponsibly cobble together a national citizenship database for purposes of voting poses major risks to both voters and our elections. Instead of taking shortcuts, we should continue to have voter rolls managed by trusted state and local officials using best practices—not federal agencies pushing partisan agendas.

4

Restricting Elections to One Day Only

Problem: Recasting "Election Day" as a single day for in-person voting intentionally makes voting harder.

Demand: Voters need multiple voting options that work for them that are accessible and well-resourced including ample early in-person voting hours, vote-by-mail opportunities, as well as polling places on Election Day.

Background: Eliminating accessible opportunities to vote early in person or by mail intentionally creates barriers to voting. Voters need accessible, well-resourced polling places, protections for voters with disabilities, and multiple voting options, including secure mail ballots. These elements ensure voters can cast their ballots in a manner and method convenient and safe for them.

5

Eliminating or Seizing Voting Machines

Problem: Threats to eliminate effective voting machines or seize voting equipment are an attempt to undermine confidence in our elections.

Demand: Voters must have access to efficient, accurate, and tested voting machines that count their votes.

Background: Threats to tested, reliable, efficient, and accessible voting machines harm voters with disabilities, introduce unnecessary delays in the election administration process, and undermine confidence in our elections. Voting machines are the preferred means of tabulating votes in elections. Voting machines currently used by state and local election officials undergo extensive testing before each election to guarantee reliability and accuracy. These machines are only accessed and administered by state and local officials who are responsible for auditing the voting machines at every step to make sure votes are recorded correctly.



6

Eliminating or Restricting Mail Voting

Problem: Specific efforts to restrict or take away mail-in voting and strip voters of this convenient, safe, and accessible option to cast a ballot.

Demand: Expand no-excuse mail ballots and mail ballot drop off locations to ensure all voters can participate.

Background: All voters should be able to vote by mail to ensure they have ample opportunity to vote in a manner that is safe and accessible. Harmful changes to mail-in voting policies, such as reduced dropboxes, limit options for voters, particularly those who rely on this method for accessibility or safety.

7

Forcing Hand Counts of Every Ballot

Problem: Calls to mandate hand counts ignore the fact that this method is neither efficient nor accurate.

Demand: Ballot tabulators are more efficient and accurate than counting by hand; hand counts should be limited to audits or testing, not standard practice.

Background: Calls to mandate hand counts, driven by conspiracy theories and extremist arguments, as the primary method of counting ballots, ignore the fact that hand-counting votes is neither efficient nor accurate. Voting machines are more efficient and accurate than counting by hand. Hand counting is more error-prone and costly than counting by machine and should be limited to audits or testing, not standard ballot counting practice.

8

Limiting Cure Periods for Ballots

Problem: Imposing unnecessary restrictions on the time allotted to fix ballot errors disenfranchises voters.

Demand: Cure processes must be accessible, include several simple options for curing a ballot and give voters ample time to fix mistakes.

Background: Every vote by every eligible voter should be counted, with opportunities to correct minor mistakes such as a missing signature or a signature that doesn't match the one in the voter's record. Best election practices require that voters must be notified of their ballot status and allowed to "cure" these mistakes in time for the ballot to be counted. Robust notice and cure programs should provide voters with adequate time after notification of a rejected ballot to correct any issues, reducing voter disenfranchisement and increasing public trust in our elections.

9

Challenging Election Certification

Problem: Attempts to block or delay certification create chaos and distrust.

Demand: Certification should be timely, transparent, and respected as the legal conclusion of an election.

Background: Attempts to block or delay certification for the benefit of a candidate or party create chaos, sow distrust in our election systems, and silence the voices of voters. Refusal to certify an election is also not legal in many states. Certification should be timely, transparent, and respected as the legal conclusion of an election. State and local officials should take priority action to ensure elections are certified.

10

Authoritarian Approaches to Elections

Problem: Using federal law enforcement or military power to interfere with the lawful administration of elections is illegal and anti-democratic.

Demand: Elections must remain civilian-led, with voters—not federal power—at the center. Everyone must respect the winners and certify results as required by law.

Background: Across the nation, academics, historians, legal experts, and pro-democracy advocates are sounding the alarm about America’s slide towards authoritarianism as we head into 2026. Some scholars specifically point to the deployment of domestic military forces and federal agents into cities in response to peaceful protests, as well as the erosion of checks and balances.



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