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ELECTIONS

# If Republicans Win On Tuesday, Thank The Election Integrity Movement

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## Against a hostile propaganda press, many Americans have poured themselves into restoring election integrity — and it's working.



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If Republican candidates do as well as expected on Tuesday, they can credit the new, widespread, and coordinated effort to begin securing U.S. elections, helping give candidates the best opportunity possible to win a fair fight in the new voting environment of mail-in balloting.

The Republican National Committee, other party entities, and dozens of public interest election nonprofit groups built over the last two years a multimillion-dollar election integrity infrastructure that passed laws improving voter ID and other election security measures, defended those laws from legal attacks by Democrats, and sued states and localities that failed to follow the law. They also recruited, educated, trained, and placed tens of thousands of new election observers and other workers throughout the long midterm voting season.

And they did it all in one of the most hostile propaganda environments on record.

## 2020's Wake-Up Call

The 2020 election was a massive wake-up call for many Americans on the right. In the months leading up to it, Democrats forced through changes to hundreds of laws and processes governing how elections are conducted.

The rule-change scheme was run by Marc Elias, a Democrat election attorney who also ran his party's Russia collusion hoax, which falsely claimed Donald Trump stole the 2016 election by colluding with Russia. Sometimes Democrats' 2020 changes were instituted legally. Frequently, though, they were effected by other means, such as getting a friendly state or local official to change the rules unilaterally.

The 2020 election plan, some of which was admitted to in a flattering Time magazine story, sought to flood the zone with tens of millions of unsupervised mail-in ballots, historically understood to be riper for fraud and other election irregularities than supervised, in-person voting. The plan also involved the private takeover of *government* election offices to run Democrat-focused get-out-the-vote operations. Mark Zuckerberg, one of the world's wealthiest and most powerful men, financed the project, doling out \$419 million to two left-wing groups that focused grants and assistance to government offices in the Democrat areas of swing states.

This radical change — “practically a revolution in how people vote,” as Time put it — included the widespread practice of placing ballot drop boxes predominantly in Democrat areas of the country, mailing out unsolicited mail-in ballots or applications for mail-in ballots, using well-funded teams of ballot harvesters both inside and outside of government, lowering and changing the standards for mail-in ballot acceptance, and fixing or “curing” ballots that were improperly filled out.

Corporate media and other Democrats claimed the election was the best-run in history. In reality, it was a mess. Big Tech and the media ran coordinated disinformation campaigns to benefit Democrats by suppressing news that hurt the party. Big Tech also deplatformed effective conservative voices and media outlets, [suppressed fundraising emails from Republicans](#), and elevated certain information to help Democrats.

There were other problems. Candidate debates occurred long after mail-in and early balloting began. Poll observers were sidelined under the guise of a Covid “emergency.” The counting of ballots cast via unsupervised, mail-in voting resulted in curious and confusing results. It took days and sometimes weeks to find out how many ballots were cast, much less for whom. In the end, Americans learned that Joseph Biden, who had spent most of his campaign at home, had become the most popular American president in history, collecting an astounding 81 million votes.

Many Republican voters wondered how things were allowed to get so bad with elections.

## **Republicans Spent 40 Years on the Sidelines**

Part of the reason Republicans hadn’t more effectively fought the election integrity battle before now is somewhat shocking. The 2020 contest was the first presidential election since Ronald Reagan’s first successful run in 1980 in which the Republican

National Committee could play any role whatsoever in Election Day operations. For nearly 40 years, the Democratic National Committee had a massive systematic advantage over its Republican counterpart: The RNC had been prohibited by law from helping with poll watcher efforts or nearly any voting-related litigation.

Democrats had accused Republicans of voter intimidation in a 1981 New Jersey gubernatorial race. The case was settled, and the two parties entered into a court-ordered consent decree limiting Republican involvement in any poll-watching operation. But Dickinson Debevoise, the Jimmy Carter-appointed judge who oversaw the agreement, never let them out of it, repeatedly modifying and strengthening it at Democrats' request.

Debevoise was a judge for only 15 years, but he stayed 21 years in senior status, a form of semi-retirement that enables judges to keep serving in a limited capacity. It literally took Debevoise's dying in 2015 for Republicans to get out of the consent decree. Upon his passing, a new judge, appointed by President Obama, was assigned the case and let the agreement expire at the end of 2018.

The effect of this four-decade hindrance on GOP poll-watching cannot be overstated. Poll watchers serve many functions. They deter voter fraud, but they also help with getting out the vote. Poll watchers can see who has voted, meaning campaigns and political parties can figure out which areas and voters to call and encourage to vote. They also can observe who was forced to vote provisionally or who was turned away at the polls.

“Without poll watchers, the RNC would have no good way to follow up with its voters to help ensure a provisional ballot is later counted, direct confused voters to their correct polling place and document irregularities, such as voting equipment malfunctions and other incidents that are important flash points in a close election or recount,” RNC Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel has explained.

For decades, Democrats built up expansive coordination efforts that the Republicans were prohibited from developing. Republican candidates and state parties could do things on their own, but not with help from the national party. In 2012, the Obama-Biden campaign bragged about recruiting 18,000 lawyers to be poll watchers, providing more than 300 trainings to ensure the observers understood election law. The volunteers would collect more than 19,000 problematic incidents at polling locations that were resolved with or without legal intervention.

The consent decree also meant the RNC was kept out of almost any litigation related to Election Day. In fact, one main part of the RNC's legal efforts was training staff to stay *away* from Election Day operations, including recounts, and fending off litigation that arose from the consent decree.

It paralyzed the RNC's political operations, as the slightest misstep would result in getting sued by Democrats. For example, when former Trump Press Secretary Sean Spicer said in an interview with GQ magazine that he'd watched 2016 returns in an oversized utility room on the fifth floor of Trump Tower, Democrats deposed him to show he'd violated the order by being on the wrong floor, one tied to Election Day outreach.

The Democrats used that trivial fact to try, unsuccessfully, to get the new judge to extend the limitation on their political rivals for another decade. Even though the decree was finally lifted after nearly 40 years, it didn't mean Republicans were on even footing with Democrats in 2020. Democrats had spent decades perfecting their Election Day operations and litigation strategy while everyone at the RNC walked on eggshells, knowing that if they so much as looked in the direction of a polling site, there could be another crackdown.

Thus there was no muscle memory about how to watch polls or communicate with a campaign. They had spent decades not being able to organize or talk to presidential campaigns, the National Republican Senatorial Committee, or the National Republican Congressional Committee about any of these efforts.

What a change, then, when McDaniel announced in early 2020 her “intention to be the most litigious chair in history.”

## **But First, Election Reforms**

Before mounting successful lawsuits, however, better laws had to be passed — a difficult task in the immediate aftermath of the 2020 election, when Democrats claimed any criticism of how that election had been run was unacceptable and possibly criminal. That campaign, designed to suppress efforts to bolster election security, continues to this day. Nevertheless, Republican lawmakers in dozens of states began pushing for election reforms.

For example, bans on so-called Zuckbucks, the private takeover of government election offices, were passed and signed into law in Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Six Democrat governors vetoed attempted bans, understanding how key Zuckerberg’s funding was to Democrat success in 2020. The governors of Kansas,

Louisiana, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin all vetoed the bans. Wisconsin's governor, currently in a tight election, vetoed twice. The Kansas legislature overrode the veto.

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The resulting contrast between election integrity in some of these battleground states could not be clearer. Take Pennsylvania, for instance, a pivotal swing state where the Democrat governor vetoed the legislature's attempted reforms. Its partisan Supreme Court meanwhile issues conflicting guidance, resulting in disparate treatment of ballots depending on the county they're cast in. Elections here are high in irregularities and low in voter trust.

Not so in Georgia. Recall that despite tremendous pressure from Democrats who alleged massive GOP-led voter suppression, including Biden who smeared election integrity efforts as "Jim Crow 2.0," Georgia passed much-needed reforms related to voter ID, mail-in voting, and drop boxes, in addition to the Zuckbucks ban. The result has been record-breaking early, in-person voter turnout, [across demographics, surpassing 2 million](#) voters this week.

Meanwhile, the Foundation for Government Accountability worked with states to make policy changes to clean voter rolls, ban ballot trafficking, secure ballot custody, roll back Covid waivers, enact penalties for election lawbreakers, require chains of custody, secure drop boxes, pre-process absentee ballots, improve absentee voter ID, and dozens of other types of reforms.

Florida has been working steadily to improve its election system since the disastrous 2000 election. Last year, that meant banning Zuckbucks. This year, those [changes included](#) “requiring voter rolls to be annually reviewed and updated, strengthening ID requirements, establishing the Office of Election Crimes and Security to investigate election law violations, and increasing penalties for violations of election laws.”

Incidentally, the Center for Renewing America [filed a complaint with the IRS](#) over the tax break that Zuckerberg and his wife Priscilla Chan received for their 2020 election meddling.

## **Litigate, Litigate, Litigate**

While the RNC and the Trump campaign did achieve some legal successes in the lead-up to the 2020 election, it was nowhere near sufficient against the well-funded and coordinated Democrat effort. Republican donors and grassroots demanded more.

The RNC got involved in [73 election integrity cases](#) in 20 states for the midterms, with plans to expand. They won a [lawsuit](#) against Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson for restricting the rights of poll challengers; got Maricopa County,

Arizona, to share [key data](#) about its partisan breakdown of poll workers; won an [open records lawsuit](#) against Mercer County, New Jersey, for refusing to share election administration data; won a [lawsuit](#) against the North Carolina State Board of Elections for restricting the rights of poll watchers; and reached a [favorable settlement](#) against Clark County, Nevada, in which the county agreed to share information about its partisan breakdown of poll workers on a rolling basis.

“I’m so grateful the RNC is back in the system after 40 years. They’re so needed,” said Minnesota State Senator and former Minnesota Secretary of State Mary Kiffmeyer.

Ken Cuccinelli, the former Virginia attorney general and acting deputy DHS secretary who now runs the [Election Transparency Initiative](#), agreed. “They’ve been a game changer in the litigation arena to keep elections clean.”

The RNC wasn’t the only big change in the litigation battle. Hotelier Steve Wynn, strategist Karl Rove, former Attorney General Bill Barr, and top Republican election lawyers launched an election litigation group, [Restoring Integrity and Trust in Elections](#) (RITE), in July 2022, and within three months chalked up several major victories.

For instance, RITE sued over controversial Wisconsin Elections Commission guidance that conflicted with state law, telling election clerks to accept ballots that had been spoiled, and [won the case](#). It was also part of the group that successfully sued Pennsylvania over whether ballots that failed to be dated, as required by state law, could be counted.

“It goes to show what responsible and tireless lawyering can do for election integrity,” said Derek Lyons, the president and CEO of RITE.

Groups with lengthier histories of battling for election integrity, such as the Public Interest Legal Foundation, also had successes. A Delaware court ruled that the state’s

[newly passed mail-in balloting scheme](#) violated its constitution.

## Monitoring Polls

U.S. elections used to occur on one day, requiring just one day of poll observations. Now that elections can spread out over days, weeks, or even months, many more workers are needed to monitor the casting of ballots.

The RNC hired 17 in-state election integrity directors and 37 state-based election integrity counsels in key states. They conducted more than 5,000 election integrity trainings, recruited more than 70,000 poll watchers and workers, and worked with more than 110,000 unique volunteers nationwide. They set up an issue reporting system and distributed copies of Poll Watcher Principles for states. If voters encounter election issues, they can file a report, and attorneys will be dispatched to resolve the issues. Sites were set up in [Arizona](#), [California](#), [Florida](#), [Georgia](#), [Iowa](#), [Maine](#), [Michigan](#), [Minnesota](#), [Nevada](#), [New Hampshire](#), [New Jersey](#), [North Carolina](#), [Ohio](#), [Pennsylvania](#), [Texas](#), [Virginia](#), and [Wisconsin](#).

Congressional Republicans [also got in on the action](#). Rep. Rodney Davis, the top Republican on the House Administration Committee, notified all 50 states that he would be [deploying dozens of specially trained election observers](#) to protect the integrity of the ballot box.

The move occurred after Democrats nearly seized a seat won by Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks of Iowa in 2020. She won her election by just six votes, leading Democrats to attempt to unseat her using parliamentary shenanigans. The Republicans of the House Administration Committee just released a [mini-doc about Democrats' attempt at literal election denialism](#).

With tens of millions of voters newly concerned about election integrity, other groups also took part in massive training operations. The [Election Integrity](#)

[Network](#), which started with a podcast on election integrity issues hosted by longtime election lawyer Cleta Mitchell, grew into state summits, which then built out into coalitions in states, attracting people to weekly meetings. The network has trained 76,000 poll workers.

The network's North Carolina Election Integrity Team covers 95 percent of that state's priority areas with poll observers. It has more than 30 local task forces, with representatives in 75 of 100 counties. More than 2,000 North Carolinians were individually trained. The group has established a strong working relationship with the state General Assembly to overhaul legislation and built relationships with local election officials. Similar groups are operating in Georgia, Virginia, Arizona, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and other states.

The Vulnerable Voters Working Group meets to develop and implement ideas to protect nursing homes from left-wing ballot harvesting. The [American Constitutional Rights Union](#) is one coalition partner working to protect seniors from illicit activities.

Part of the benefit of an aggressive legal strategy is that it incentivizes election bureaucrats and officials to follow the law, which helps restore trust in elections, Election Integrity Network Director Marshall Yates says. "What these people do is provide transparency and accountability to the system that was previously just run by unaccountable bureaucrats. They may or may not see something but just their presence is a check on making sure there is some accountability to the system, and it should restore confidence in seeing how elections were administered."

## What Remains

While reforms were passed in more than two dozen states, key lawsuits were filed and won, and poll workers are being deployed nationwide, many problems remain. Even with the recent Pennsylvania Supreme Court victory, that state remains

essentially lawless when it comes to election integrity. North Carolina, Nevada, Wisconsin, and other battleground states retain problematic election processes and guidance. And inflated voter rolls, combined with unsolicited mail-in ballots, are a recipe for disaster.

The new election integrity groups have much work to do in the years ahead. But many Americans, from establishment Republicans to grassroots conservatives, have poured themselves into restoring integrity to elections nationwide. They have begun to achieve major successes in lobbying for election security, litigating against a well-funded activist opposition, and training poll watchers. And they did it all in the face of a hostile propaganda press that maliciously disparaged them as [election deniers](#).



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