

# News From The States

# EVENING WRAP

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By [Kate Queram](#)

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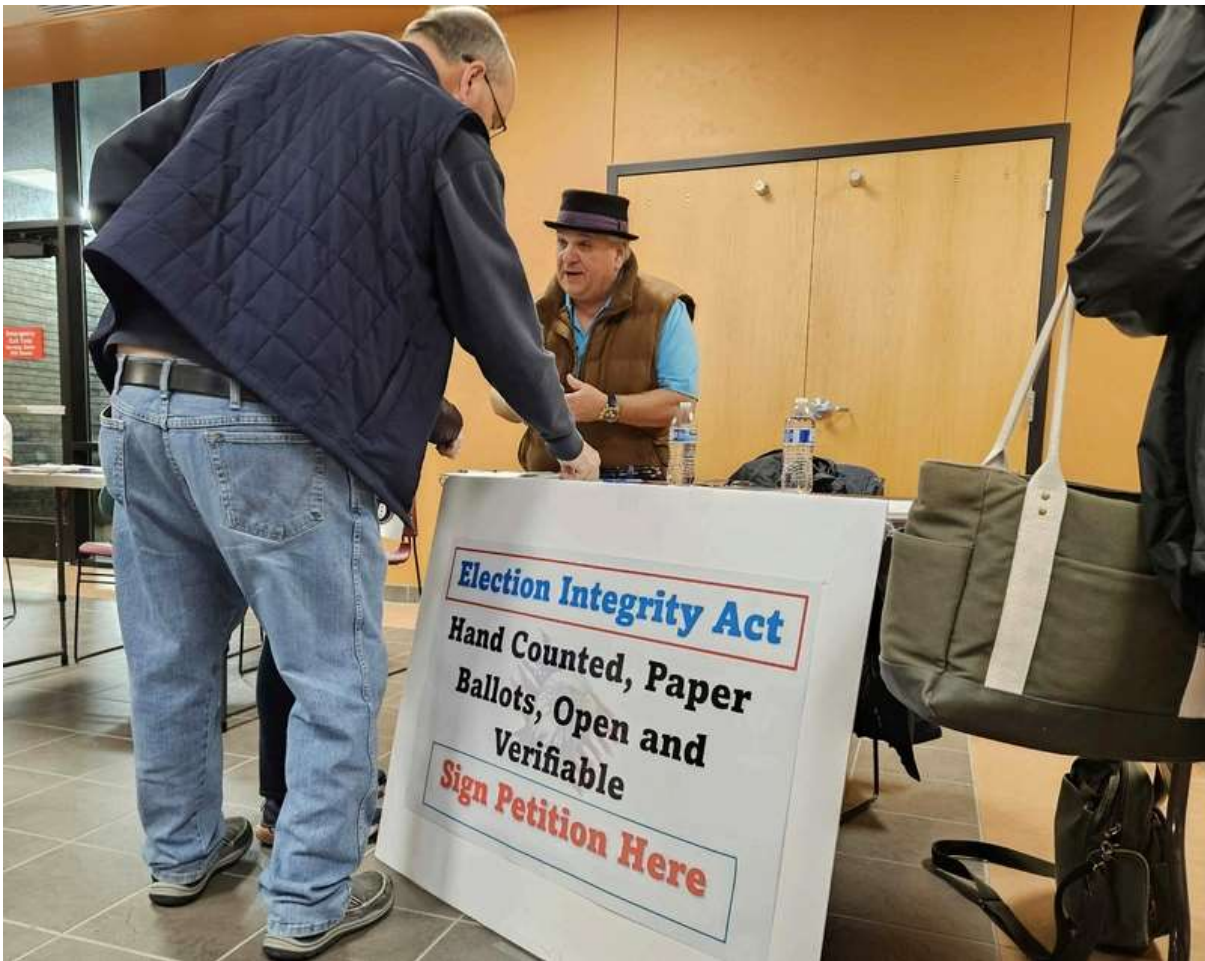
We are 252 days out from the 2024 election, but the election drama is already out in full force.



## The Big Takeaway

A citizen-led effort to amend North Dakota's constitution in the name of "election integrity" would ... actually just sort of ruin elections, Secretary of State Michael Howe [told the North Dakota Monitor](#).

"People of North Dakota have every right to petition for whatever they want, and I think that's a good process, but I fail to see what's wrong about our election process here and need a complete overhaul," Howe said. "[The proposal] does nothing to secure our elections. It does the exact opposite."



*I wonder how they're verifying those signatures.  
(Photo by Jeff Beach/North Dakota Monitor)*

The so-called [Election Integrity Act](#) would essentially rewrite the state's election laws via a bevy of small changes, from empowering any U.S. citizen to audit ballots to barring unsupervised drop boxes, early voting, and mail-in ballots. All non-absentee voting would take place on Election Day using paper ballots, which would be tabulated by hand beginning that night and "continuing uninterrupted until hand counting is completed."

Collectively, the provisions are supposed to restore faith in the electoral process, according to Lydia Gessele, who became chair of the initiative's [sponsoring committee](#) after viewing what she described as "errors" while serving as a 2022 election judge in Wells County.

"I saw major problems with the machines when they did a test run before the November election when they had to continue to keep running these ballots through until they got the right total," she said. "Well, if the machines can tabulate properly, that shouldn't have to be done."

**Except the tabulators worked just fine**, county officials said. So does the current election process, which the state auditor [deemed](#) "incredibly secure"

following an [“extensive review”](#) in October 2022. Many of those existing safeguards would be diminished under the proposed initiative, Howe said. Others simply make no sense, like a provision that would eliminate touch-screen voting — a federally mandated accommodation for people with disabilities. The nonstop ballot-counting requirement is also impractical, he said. That process could take *days*.

“It’s extremely labor intensive,” he said.



HURRY UP WE HAVE TO START COUNTING THESE BALLOTS  
(Photo by Jeniffer Solis/Nevada Current)

**It’s also [less secure](#)**, though that hasn’t stopped Republicans from embracing it. The myth of hand tabulation is one of a host of misinformed storylines and conspiracy theories fueling widespread distrust in the democratic process, Nevada Secretary of State Cisco Aguilar told lawmakers last week.

“Please, for the sake of the upcoming presidential election cycle, for election workers across this state, speak out about election misinformation,” he told the [Joint Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections](#) on Thursday. Each elected official in this room is in office because Nevada runs the most secure, fair and accessible elections in the country.”

The comments came two weeks after state Republicans eschewed an official presidential primary in favor of their own caucus, prompting [confusion and drama](#)

that deepened after a [coding error](#) that listed primary ballots in the voting records of people who did not participate in the election, [the Nevada Current reported](#). The glitch, which occurred during a data transfer between a county website and the statewide voter registration database, did not involve ballot tabulation or affect the results of the primary, Aguilar said. But it was still enough to reignite [debunked conspiracy theories](#) about voter fraud, election officials said.

“Our phones blew up because of the confusion between the presidential preference primary and the caucus and how that all worked,” said Scott Hoen, clerk-recorder in Carson City. “People were asking why certain candidates didn’t appear on the presidential preference ballot, ‘how can I vote or can I vote twice,’ and just, ‘what precinct do I live in?’ We referred a lot of those to the party. But it was significant in terms of interruption to our workflow.”



*Byeeeeeee*

*(Photo by Andrew Roth/Michigan Advance)*

**Workflow is no longer a concern for Ronna McDaniel**, who said Monday she would resign as chair of the Republican National Committee, [the Michigan Advance reported](#). McDaniel, a former Michigan GOP chair and the niece of U.S. Sen. Mitt Romney (R-Utah), confirmed the move [in a statement](#), saying she would “step aside” at the party’s spring training on March 8 in Houston.

“The RNC has historically undergone change once we have a nominee and it has always been my intention to honor that tradition,” she said. “I remain committed to winning back the White House and electing Republicans up and down the ballot in November.”

**It’s less an exit than an ouster** orchestrated by supporters of likely GOP nominee Donald Trump, who blamed McDaniel for the RNC’s shaky finances and its lackluster performance in the last [three election cycles](#). By mid-February, Trump had made it clear he’d prefer Michael Whatley, a veteran [GOP operative](#) and [prominent election denier](#), to helm the committee, with his daughter-in-law Lara Trump serving as co-chair.

McDaniel’s announcement was [distributed with](#) a list of the party’s accomplishments under her leadership (“firing Nancy Pelosi,” “investing \$4 million in the VA gubernatorial election in 2021”) and two pages of compliments from mostly obscure Republicans, including U.S. Rep. John James (Michigan), (recently obscure) former House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and Anne Hathaway ([not that one](#)), national committeewoman for the Indiana RNC.

“From site selection for the convention, the convention, debates and grassroots engagement and fundraising, she’s been an ally, a coach and partner!” Hathaway enthused. “The Republican Party and our nation are better off because of her, and I am eager to continue the work we began together to delivery [sic] VICTORY in November.”

### Special delivery

- [Court filings reveal secret grand jury interviews that led to indictments of Arizona county supervisors over alleged midterm election conspiracy](#)
- [Mr. QAnon Shaman goes to the Arizona Capitol](#)
- [Bill seeks to overhaul Oklahoma petition process by increasing cost, expanding protest period](#)
- [Washington’s presidential primary is underway. Are you ready?](#)



### Also Trending

Citing the ever-important need for “local control,” Kentucky Republicans this month advanced a proposal to scrap [a decades-old policy](#) that requires local water supplies to be fortified with [fluoride](#), a naturally occurring mineral that

strengthens tooth enamel and [reduces decay](#) by as much as 25%, [the Kentucky Lantern reported](#).



*Ah, fluoride.*

*(Photo by Deborah Yetter for the Kentucky Lantern)*

**There is nothing controversial about fluoridated water**, which has been a thing since [at least the 1940s](#) and is currently used by [around three-fourths](#) of the U.S. population. Kentucky was among the earliest states to introduce fluoride into water supplies and remains [one of the few](#) with a statewide mandate. As a result, [virtually all](#) of the state’s water is fluoridated, which is a good thing for anyone who enjoys having teeth. The widespread adoption of fluoridated water is credited with large declines in cavities and tooth decay in [the second half](#) of the 20th century, particularly [among children](#).

**This should matter in Kentucky**, which [ranks 49th](#) in overall oral health and has more toothless older adults than almost any other state. Eliminating fluoride from drinking water supplies will compound existing issues and create new ones, dentists warned, driving up the cost of Medicaid and increasing demand for care amid a prolonged shortage of providers.

“We don’t have the resources to handle that increase,” said Jennifer Hasch, a dental hygienist based in Louisville. “All these dental providers are desperately

trying to catch up with the current need.”

Scores of dentists, doctors, water companies and insurance providers echoed those claims, all to no avail. The thing, you see, is the lack of control at the *local level*.

“It’s a bill that will undo an unfunded mandate and return the issue to local control,” explained state Rep. Mark Hart, a Falmouth Republican.

“This is a local control issue,” said state Rep. William Lawrence, a Republican from Maysville, which added fluoride to its drinking water in 1951, three years before it became state policy.

“Local control — that’s what this bill is about,” agreed state Rep. Steve Rawlings, a Burlington Republican.

“Let’s just leave it to local control,” added state Rep. Kevin Bratcher, a Louisville Republican.

**You get the drift.** In total, six members of the House State Government Committee cited “local control” in their support for the bill, which cleared the committee on a 16-1 vote. Non-legislative supporters included officials from four rural water districts, one of whom cited non-specific “facts proving” the dangers of fluoride. Another warned of “adverse effects” ranging from thyroid to bone and (yep) tooth problems. The bill goes next to the rules committee.

### Side effects

- [Amid measles outbreak in South Florida in Broward, another infection emerged in Central Florida](#)
- [At the fringes of treatment options, some Montanans find hope through psychedelics](#)
- [Texas county to launch \\$23 million project to keep mentally ill from jail](#)



### From The Newsrooms

#### Criminal Justice

- [Nebraska Corrections officials face another lawsuit over slaying of inmate in a double-bunked cell](#)
- [Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost slams Trump’s New York fraud judgment as “weaponizing justice”](#)

- [New Hampshire veterans court would resolve charges with treatment instead of prosecution](#)
- [South Dakota corrections secretary: New women's prison could be filled with addicts on day one](#)

## Gov & Politics

- [U.S. speaker fight influences Arkansas congressional race](#)
- [Duke University's David Schanzer on the state of democracy, how U.S. allies view the '24 election](#)
- [Woes from Ohio Republican infighting continue as spending proposal stalls](#)
- [Biden and Trump both heading to the southern border on Thursday](#)

## Economy

- [Minnesota attorney general, lawmakers announce agenda to address corporate consolidation](#)
- [In New Jersey hotel franchise fight, both sides warn of impact on World Cup readiness](#)
- [Oregon homeowners face soaring premiums, few property insurance options over wildfires](#)
- [South Carolina readying training for EV workers across the state. Here's what job seekers can expect.](#)



## One Last Thing

I regret to/delight in informing you that there is a competition called [the Florida Man Games](#), in which competitors don their jorts and stuff down plates of pork and sausage, duel in muddy pool water and simulate escaping police by running while toting a bunch of heavy loot. It's almost enough to make you rethink the idea of Florida. *Almost.*



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