

News From The States

EVENING WRAP

Thanks for being here and [supporting our work](#).



By [Kate Queram](#)

We're 257 days out from the 2024 election, which seems like a good time to begin panicking about the 2024 election. (Just kidding. I have been panicking for months!) Stressing about politics is not new for me, but it is newly annoying, because by all accounts, this should not be a stressful year. The economy is strong! Jon Stewart is back! And yes, voters are [concerned](#) that Joe Biden is old, but most are [more concerned](#) that the other candidate is spending [\\$4 million per month](#) to fight 91 felony charges, many of them related to his attempts to overthrow the government after he lost the *last* election. *Surely*, this will be the year we get to look away from democracy, confident in its ability to march right along into the future!

It's a nice story, which is how you know it isn't ours. We don't have the luxury of ignoring the machinations of democracy, which is far more fragile than we'd believed. This was true long before 2020 — Republicans spent decades making sure of that — but it's so much worse now. Think of it like a chipped windshield. You can ignore the tiny divot, but eventually, the whole thing will fall apart, right in front of your eyes.



The Big Takeaway

The election matters, of course, but maybe not as definitively as you might

expect. Trump could lose and disappear from public life forever, and we'd still spend the next decade grappling with the aftershocks of his ascent. There is no kill switch. There is only triage.

This is an imperfect analogy, in that [trriage](#) requires you to prioritize the most critical issue, which is difficult when all of the issues seem equally critical. As of December, two-thirds of Trump supporters *still* believed that he actually won the 2020 election. More than half already [doubt the accuracy](#) of the results in the 2024 election. The [baseless](#) distrust has sharpened partisan tension, leaving vast majorities of Americans [bracing for political violence](#) in November. The unrest underscores the importance of election oversight at a time when experienced election workers are [leaving their jobs in droves](#) after more than three years of threats and intimidation. This is not a country. This is a pressure cooker.

Republicans have done little to quell the panic, except for when it might benefit them politically. Last summer, national Republicans began [a coordinated push](#) to promote early voting and mail-in ballots, an abrupt about-face after three years of [painting both methods](#) as rife with fraud. Officials never admitted those claims [were false](#). They just blamed Democrats, [our national bureau reported](#).



Anyone can just ride a bike up to a ballot box and vote, and that is how you know that ballot boxes are filled

with lies!

(Photo by Stephen Maturen/Getty Images)

"We can't play catch up. We can't start from behind. We can't let Dems get a big head start and think we're going to win it all on Election Day," ousted Republican National Committee chairwoman Ronna McDaniel [said](#) on a conference call in November. "Things happen on Election Day."

Behind the scenes, RNC lawyers have continued to wage war on mail-in voting. On Tuesday, attorneys argued [in federal court](#) that Pennsylvania should toss ballots with missing or incorrect dates. Eleven days earlier, they filed a [lawsuit](#) against new voting rules in Arizona and [defended](#) a Georgia law restricting mail voting. Last month, they joined the defense of a similar law in [Ohio](#). (Similar requests were denied by judges in [North Carolina](#) and [Wisconsin](#).) In September, GOP lawyers [sued to block](#) a New York law expanding mail-in voting and [formally objected](#) to a Nevada law that would prevent volunteer observers from interfering with ballot counts.

The legal arguments varied by state, but they all had the same goal: Making it harder to vote by mail in hopes of hamstringing Democrats, who did not spend years spreading conspiracy theories about mail ballots and are thus more likely to [embrace them](#). RNC lawyers admitted as much last month [in a lawsuit](#) seeking a nationwide ban on mail ballots received after Election Day, saying the deadline "specifically and disproportionately harms Republican candidates" because late ballots "disproportionately break for Democrats."



*I WONDER WHY THAT MIGHT BE. QUITE THE HEAD-SCRATCHER, THAT.
(Photo by BillionPhotos.com/Adobe Stock)*

Like so many things Republican, this is a ham-handed attempt at subterfuge that could have devastating impacts on democracy. The legal onslaught specifically targets key swing states, [many of them](#) helmed by GOP lawmakers who have pushed corresponding legislative proposals. Collectively, those efforts interpret election laws in ways that directly harm voters, most of them [Democrats](#) . None of the policies are supported by evidence, which probably matters less than the whims of a handful of federal judges. The tepid campaign to reframe mail-in ballots and early voting is, ultimately, nothing but lip service, according to Marc Elias, a prominent Democratic election lawyer.

“In courtrooms and state legislatures across the country, Republicans are doing everything in their power to restrict mail-in voting,” Elias said in a statement. “The RNC’s legal strategy is clear. The Republican Party no longer seeks to earn the support of a majority of the American electorate. Instead, they are launching a legal assault on our democracy.”

The attacks extend far beyond just mail ballots. A proposed bill in New Hampshire would remove all exceptions to an existing voter ID law, forcing

residents to bring proof of citizenship — an original birth certificate, a passport — when registering to vote, even on Election Day, [the New Hampshire Bulletin reported](#).

[The proposal](#), back for the second year in a row, is a marked change from current law, which allows voters to sign an affidavit attesting to their citizenship if they (like...all of us?) do not carry on their person at all times an original copy of their birth certificate. And that is the *entire point*, according to Rep. Bob Lynn, the Republican who sponsored the bill. There's just something *suspicious* about a person who cannot produce at random a valid passport or proof of their own birth, you know?



“OK, I just need to see your long-form birth certificate, a DNA sample, a letter from your mom and your high school transcript.”

(Photo by David Paul Morris/Getty Images)

“It seems to me that it is not a good system that allows someone, where you’re supposed to have all this stuff, the documentation in the four areas, [to be] able to say, in effect, ‘Well I don’t have that, but I swear that that is all true,’” he said at a hearing Tuesday. “And we just sort of have to accept that.”

And sure, yes, voting is a right, Lynn continued. But that does not mean you should not have to *plan ahead* to do it! It’s not like it’s hard to access your birth

certificate! You just call (or email or show up in person) the county clerk's office (or the register of deeds) and prove your identity and pay in cash (or by check or by credit card) and then rely on the whims of the United States Postal Service for a few days (or a week or a month or until you are very, very dead) and bing, bang, boom, birth certificate!

"If I want to vote in 10 minutes, I shouldn't have started thinking about it 10 minutes ago," he said. "I should have started thinking about it a while ago so that I could make sure I can do what I need to do to be able to vote. I don't think that's unreasonable."

But for a lot of people, it is. The policy would probably seem unreasonable to infrequent voters, who most likely aren't aware that the state culls inactive residents from its voter rolls every 10 years. The policy would presumably feel unreasonable to people whose houses have burned down, as well as victims of domestic violence, who often flee their homes with little notice or preparation. Frankly, it's unreasonable even for average voters who just *don't carry a birth certificate around all the time or have no idea that their passport is expired because who can even travel in this economy?* Altogether, that makes it *unreasonable* for "hundreds if not thousands of people," according to Henry Klementowicz, senior staff attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union of New Hampshire.



*She voted. SO THERE.
(Photo by Getty Images)*

Voter registration is a rosier topic in Ohio, where the number of registered 18-year-olds [increased by 35%](#) from August to January, [the Ohio Capital Journal reported](#). Experts attributed the jump to a pair of high-profile special elections in 2023, where voters turned out first to defend their own ability to amend the state’s constitution and then to codify abortion rights and legalize recreational marijuana.

“It provided a concentrated deadline for people to focus on to get registered,” said Laura Brill, founder and CEO of the nonprofit Civics Center. “What we typically see is that registration rates, especially for the youngest voters, can go up very significantly when young people become more aware of elections in which their votes will matter.”

That momentum could carry into November, when Ohio voters will elect a president, a U.S. senator, three state Supreme Court justices, every single state House representative, and also potentially weigh in on an anti-gerrymandering amendment. Participation among younger voters will likely hinge on the effectiveness of campaign messaging, along with the rollout of [a new law](#) that bars out-of-state students from using college-issued IDs to vote. (Acceptable

forms of ID include passports, military cards, and Ohio-issued state IDs, which students can obtain if they are cool with invalidating drivers licenses from their home states. Voting is a right, but you've *got to plan ahead!*)

The impact could be huge, according to Cassie Mohr, a senior at Ohio State University and co-founder of Buckeyes for Voting Rights. At OSU alone, there are more than 12,000 out-of-state students.

"I think that it's going to put a huge strain on county board of elections offices," she said. "This photo ID law is going to create a lot of chaos in November."

Chaos by design

- [Anti-super PAC initiative headed to Maine Legislature for consideration](#)
- [Tensions exposed as conservative group wades into North Carolina Democratic primary](#)
- [Tennessee House panel passes potentially unconstitutional ban on expelled lawmakers](#)



Caught Our Eye

Look, nobody wants Nazis in Maine, but you can't just go around making laws to restrict Nazi (and other "paramilitary") activity. That would be a "knee-jerk reaction," according to state House Minority Leader Billy Bob Faulkingham. It would be an "authoritarian fever dream," per state Rep. John Andrews (a Republican). According to the Wikipedia definition of "paramilitary," it could even affect members of the American Legion, according to state Rep. James Thorne (a Republican).

"We did not use the Wikipedia definitions," responded state Rep. Sue Salisbury, a Westbrook Democrat.



*Not pictured: Nazis or Wikipedia definitions.
(Photo by Jim Neuger/Maine Morning Star)*

The bill, approved narrowly this week by both chambers of the legislature, would establish regulations to prevent paramilitary activity and “civil disorder,” defined as a violent public disturbance by two or more people that causes either immediate danger, or actual harm, to people or public property, [the Maine Morning Star reported](#) . The proposal was introduced with bipartisan support after a neo-Nazi [leader](#) purchased a parcel of land to [house](#) a training facility, but the bill’s Republican co-sponsor had abandoned the measure by the time it came up for a vote.



From The Newsrooms

Health Care

- [As Alaska food stamp backlog dwindles, Public Assistance balances federal requirements, local need](#)
- [Coalition aims to break cycle of poverty with sweeping ‘More For Memphis’ initiative](#)
- [Medicaid ‘doomsday’ bill threatens](#)

- [Legislation to let undocumented immigrants use Maryland health care marketplace to get House vote](#)
- [vital services for vulnerable Utahns, advocates say](#)

Reproductive Rights

- [Alabama senator planning to file bill that could protect in vitro fertilization](#)
- [Arkansas maternal health care landscape needs more coordination and teamwork, physicians say](#)
- [In wrongful death suits, Florida Republicans want fetuses to be covered as soon as they're in the womb](#)
- [Kansas Republicans introduce new anti-abortion bills, including prison time for 'coercion'](#)

Gov & Politics

- [Missouri Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft draws bipartisan attacks over comments about veterans benefits](#)
- [Nevada spent \\$15 million to help 350 people find jobs](#)
- [Pro-Palestinian protesters embrace disruption to push New Jersey politicians to act on Gaza war](#)



One Last Thing

Malia Obama is using [the stage name](#) “Malia Ann” for her fledgling film career. No one will ever know!

News From The States

A PROJECT OF STATES NEWSROOM

Did someone forward you this newsletter?

[SUBSCRIBE](#) | [LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR NEWSROOMS](#) | [FOLLOW](#)



©News From The States, all rights reserved.

www.newsfromthestates.com | info@newsfromthestates.com

Manage your donation and subscription preferences [here](#).

Add info@newsfromthestates.com to your [address book](#) to ensure delivery.

Did someone forward you this newsletter? [Click here](#) to get it delivered to your inbox.

States Newsroom – News From The States

1414 Raleigh Rd #127

Chapel Hill, NC 27517

United States

You are receiving this email because you opted in via our website or States Newsroom. If you believe you received this message in error or wish to change your subscription, please (Unsubscribing is not supported in previews).