

How we know voter fraud in the U.S. is very rare

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Since the 2020 election, accusations of voter fraud in the United States are much more frequent. These accusations cover a broad range: dead people voting, non-citizens voting, illegal mail-in votes, extra ballots put in drop boxes, people voting more than once, voting machines counting inaccurately, etc. Yet investigations on voter fraud, even by conservative organizations, have shown that voter fraud is very rare. The accusations alone result in less trust in the outcomes of elections, a danger to democracy even though investigations almost always discover no fraud.

States hold the primary role in administering presidential elections and those for members of Congress, as established in the U.S. Constitution, Article II. Because this authority is granted to the states, no state carries out this responsibility in exactly in the same manner, but each state has procedures to safeguard the voting process. I learned about many of these safeguards for North Carolina by attending county Board of Elections meetings and participating in poll observation inside vote polling places in my county during an election. But to ensure that I fully understood these safeguards, I made an appointment to interview the Director of Elections for Gaston County, Adam Ragan.

A few of the safeguards are explained below. While these are safeguards used in North Carolina, other states use very similar safeguards. Here is a [detailed list of voting system security measures](#) used by states as guidance and best practices.

First, the voting machines or tabulators are not connected to the Internet.

Second, the type of paper, font, and design of the ballot are carefully selected. Since registered voters can often download a copy of their ballot, this could be downloaded and copied, but the feel of the ballot would not be the same. Which ballot would be copied to be fraudulently used? North Carolina has over 2,000 different ballot styles, and Gaston County over 25. While all ballots will have the same national and statewide races, the ballots will diverge from there. Depending on congressional district, state legislative districts, school districts, county officials, city officials, and other elected offices, your ballot is matched to your address.

Third, registering to vote requires registering with your address and name. Some proof of residence will be required. In most states, no proof of citizenship is required. The registration form will require the voter to sign that they are a citizen. The penalty for a noncitizen voting is severe. When the voter comes to the polling place, you are asked your name which must be on the voter roll. Then you are asked for your address. If these

don't match, you cannot vote. To vote with a fake ballot, the person would have to register in someone else's name and know that person is not voting. While in theory, this could be possible, this is unlikely and could not result in many fraudulent votes.

Fourth, when a polling place is opened, before voters are allowed in, the chief judge and staff count the blank ballots. When the poll closes, the chief judge and staff count the number of ballots that had to be redone because of a mistake, count the number of unused blank ballots, and the number of ballots cast according to the tabulator. These numbers – blank ballots still left, ballots cast, and redone ballots – must add up to exactly the number of blank ballots that the polling site had before the voting started. The book of voter registrations must be examined and the number of those who checked in to vote must be the same number as the number of the ballots cast.

The ballots from the polling sites are brought in locked boxes to the county Board of Elections and locked in a secure room. These boxes will not be opened until the county Board of Elections members are all there in person. Absentee ballots, both those mailed in and those dropped off, will not be examined until everyone on the Board of Elections is present.

The certification of the election must be done when all members of the election board are present; anyone can attend that meeting to observe. At that meeting, any issues are brought up. At the last meeting I attended, eight ballots were brought up to be discarded from citizens who voted prior to election day and then died before election day. These votes were deducted from the tallies. The Department of Health reports all of these deaths to the county Board of Elections.

I encourage you to attend county Board of Elections, ask questions, and if possible, volunteer to be a poll watcher.

Next month, an article will list the ways that citizens can be involved in and support the voting process.

Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and Senators and Congressmen and Government officials but the voters of this country. –Franklin D. Roosevelt

In this possibly terminal phase of human existence, democracy and freedom are more than just ideals to be valued - they may be essential to survival. –Noam Chomsky