

# Right-wing groups prepare national campaign to disenfranchise US voters

Eric London  
17 September 2012

With the US general election less than two months away, right-wing groups are waging a nationwide campaign to disenfranchise hundreds of thousands of working class and minority voters.

Amongst the most prominent of these groups is the King Street Patriots, a Texas-based Tea Party group whose “True the Vote” project was detailed in a recent report issued jointly by the non-partisan advocacy organizations Demos and Common Cause.

The report, titled “Bullies at the Ballot”, warns that True the Vote’s well-funded campaign is active in over 30 states. A True the Vote spokesperson announced earlier this year that it “anticipates training 1 million poll watchers around the country for this year’s election.”

True the Vote has explained that its intentions are to make voting “like driving and seeing the police following you.” Tactics include challenging the registration status of millions of minority voters, blocking voter lines, “hovering” over voters inside voting booths, and harassing voters and election officials in and around polling places.

This coincides with a wave of new photo identification requirement laws meant to prevent poor and working class citizens from voting. In total, nine states require voters to show state-issued identification before voting and 17 states have some sort of photo ID requirement for voting. The Department of Justice has filed suit against some states’ requirements, claiming that voter purges must occur at least 90 days before election day in order to comply with the National Voter Registration Act.

In Ohio, a federal district court ruled August 31 that the Republican-controlled state government could not go ahead with plans to limit early voting that were clearly aimed at black churches, which have developed

a popular campaign of mobilizing congregations to vote on the Sunday before the election, under the slogan “souls to the polls.”

The state government proposed to end early voting on the Friday before the Tuesday election, in a transparent effort to reduce black turnout. The chairman of the Franklin County (Columbus) Republican Party, Doug Preisse, said, “I guess I really actually feel we shouldn’t contort the voting process to accommodate the urban—read African-American—voter-turnout machine.”

The main goal of the True the Vote campaign has a similar target. Its leaders profess the desire to prevent “illegal aliens” and “the food stamp army” from participating in the democratic process. A speaker at True the Vote’s Colorado State Summit told the audience they “were doing God’s work. Your opposition are [sic] cartoon characters. They are. They are fun to beat up. They are fun to humiliate. You are on the side of the angels. And these people are just frauds, charlatans and liars.”

The National Director for ResistNet, a Tea Party web site, explained that True the Vote volunteers should hide secret cameras and use them to film working class voters at the polls. “It is illegal to video the polling place,” the web site admits, “but you can video the birds on top of the polling place or the dog sitting in front of it. If your video of birds or dogs happens to include voter vans, well...”

Although the King Street Patriots and True the Vote claim that their actions helps prevent voter fraud, this is simply a ruse to justify the abrogation of yet another democratic right. Study after study has refuted claims that voter fraud is widespread in the US. In Florida, the center of the largest voter purge program in US history, there have been only 10 cases of non-citizen voter

fraud, according to University of Florida elections expert Dan Smith. Only 16 cases have been identified in Colorado since 2000 and similarly insignificant numbers exist across other states.

During the petitioning process for the Wisconsin recall election, True the Vote claimed that over half of the nearly 1 million signatures gathered to recall Republican Governor Scott Walker were fraudulent. An official state audit found that only five of the signatures were false names.

The non-existence of widespread voter fraud exposes the true purpose of the voter ID laws: to prevent poor and working class voters from voting in the 2012 elections.

A study released last week by researchers at the University of Chicago and Washington University in St. Louis found that as many as 700,000 young, working class and minority voters may be prevented from voting due to photo ID requirements.

Similar requirements in Texas could prevent 1.5 million people from voting, and in Pennsylvania, an estimated 9 percent of registered voters will not be able to vote in 2012 due to recently passed restrictions. The state Department of Transportation claims that 785,000 voters do not have PennDoT photo IDs. Officials claim that so far, only 6,000 have obtained an ID for the purpose of voting.

Pennsylvania Republican and House Speaker Mike Turzai commented that the state's voter ID requirement is "gonna allow Governor Romney to win the state of Pennsylvania."

In Tennessee, 230,000 elderly citizens do not have valid photo identification and would be forced to vote provisionally. As many as 40 percent of all provisional ballots are not counted.

A purge of the voter list in Florida using motor vehicle databases originally flagged 180,000 Florida voters as being potentially fraudulent, including, ironically, Republican Governor Rick Scott. Some 87 percent of the people on the original list were members of racial minorities.

There is nothing new about using voter fraud as a pretense to crack down on democratic rights. Four years after the stolen election of 2000, the Republican Party began "caging" voters in working class areas of Ohio, including Cleveland, Toledo, and Akron. Caging

is the process through which an organization sends mail to hundreds of thousands or millions of voters and builds a purge list based on which mail is returned-to-sender due to a non-existent or incorrect address.

The exact requirements for eliminating a voter's eligibility vary from state to state.

In some states, return mail is considered prima facie evidence to sustain a challenge to a voter's eligibility. Other states, like Ohio, have recently relaxed this requirement, stating that although return mail can be used to purge a voter, it must be substantiated with additional evidence.

Eligibility can be challenged up to election day in Colorado, Florida, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia. Furthermore, ambiguous voter intimidation laws mean that the tactics of True the Vote activists may not be deemed illegal.

The Democratic Party's response to the mass disenfranchisement campaign being carried out by the Republicans and various Tea Party groups has been embarrassingly mute. The Obama campaign has filed suit in "battleground" states where the mass suppression of minority voters could swing the election in favor of Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney.

But the Obama administration has carefully avoided any wider campaign to warn the working class of the voter suppression methods or expose the anti-democratic agenda of the Republican right.

This is because the Democrats are as responsible as the Republicans for eliminating the democratic rights guaranteed to the American people. The Obama administration has not only extended but has also expanded the anti-democratic policies of George W. Bush.

That the Democrats have no problem attempting to exclude third party candidates from the ballot shows that their opposition to voter ID laws is purely for electoral advantage.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**