

# As US vote total surges, Trump, Republicans seek to block counting

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Six days until Election Day, some 70 million people have already cast ballots, either in early in-person voting or by mail, a figure which is more than half the total turnout in 2016, when 138 million voted. In 2020, as many as 160 million people are expected to vote, with as many as 100 million voting early or by mail.

While the ballots remain secret and unopened, most states report the number of registered Democrats, Republicans and independents who have already voted, and these figures suggest a huge lead for the Democratic Party—not surprising, given the efforts by the Trump campaign both to denigrate mail balloting and to dismiss fears of the coronavirus, the main reason for the surge in early voting.

According to a tabulation Monday by the *Washington Post*, many heavily Democratic states have already seen early voting numbers as high as 60 percent of the total turnout in 2016, including Washington (67 percent), Colorado (62 percent), Oregon (58 percent), Massachusetts (50 percent) and California (48 percent). By contrast, many heavily Republican states have early votes at a much lower percentage of 2016 turnout, including Missouri (19 percent), Oklahoma (14 percent), Alabama (7 percent) and Mississippi (5 percent).

Significantly, there have been extremely high early voting numbers reported in the more closely contested “battleground” states, indicating that voters in those states are following the voting recommendations of the Biden rather than the Trump campaign.

The most remarkable number is in Texas, where 7.4 million people have already voted, more than any other state, and a figure that is 82 percent of total 2016 vote. This suggests that voter turnout in the second-largest state, long dominated by the Republican Party, is skyrocketing, particularly in the urban areas, where

hostility towards Trump and the ultra-right is more prevalent.

Other battleground states with high early voting numbers compared to 2016 total votes include North Carolina (67 percent), Ohio (66 percent), Nevada (66 percent), Florida (63 percent) and Arizona (60 percent). All but Nevada were won by Trump four years ago.

All indications are that by the time the polls open on Election Day, as much as three-quarters of the Democratic Party vote will already have been cast, while Republicans will dominate the same-day, in-person voting. This explains why the Trump campaign is seeking to disqualify as many of the mail ballots and early in-person votes as possible, through bogus claims of fraud.

These efforts have the backing of the right-wing majority on the US Supreme Court, as demonstrated by Tuesday’s decision to strike down a lower court decision allowing the state of Wisconsin to count mail ballots arriving as late as nine days after November 3 as long as they were postmarked by Election Day. Counting these late-arriving ballots is an effort to offset the deliberate slowing of the mail by the US Postal Service under the direction of Trump crony and Republican fundraiser Louis DeJoy, the postmaster general.

In supporting this outrageous and reactionary ruling, Justice Brett Kavanaugh cited the 2000 court decision in *Bush v. Gore*, the 5–4 ruling that awarded Florida’s electoral votes and the presidency to Republican George W. Bush, although Democrat Al Gore had won the popular vote nationwide and was the likely winner in Florida if all votes had been counted. It was the first time that *Bush v. Gore* has been cited as a precedent, a signal that the right-wing majority on the court will do everything in its power to award the 2020 election to

Donald Trump.

Republican-controlled state governments have sought to manufacture a pretext for suppressing as many of the mail ballots as possible by barring election officials from counting or otherwise processing these ballots before Election Day, and then demanding that they deliver “final” results overnight after the polls close. This would compel election officials to count all the mail ballots in a single day—a practical impossibility, since ballots that have been passed through postal processing frequently are creased, bent or otherwise damaged, cannot be fed into tabulating machines and have to be counted by hand.

In some Republican-controlled counties in Pennsylvania, officials have even decided as a matter of policy to begin counting mail ballots only after all in-person ballots have been tabulated. Given the partisan split in voting methods, this amounts to counting all the Republican votes first, while leaving the Democratic votes to the end, if time permits.

In Michigan, the Republican-controlled state legislature rejected pleas that the record 2.1 million in early and mail ballots should be counted before Election Day, with the tallies kept secret. Instead, the Republicans gave election officials only an additional 24 hours to process unopened mail ballots—removing outer envelopes, checking signatures, but not opening the actual ballot or tabulating any votes.

Perhaps the most systematic anti-democratic campaign is being waged by the state government in Texas, whose 38 electoral votes are the basis for any Republican effort to win the Electoral College. On Tuesday, the Texas Supreme Court issued a ruling confirming the order by Texas Governor Greg Abbott that limits the number of mail-ballot drop boxes to one per county.

This means that rural Loving County in west Texas, with fewer than 100 inhabitants, has as many drop boxes as Harris County, which includes the city of Houston, with a population of 4.7 million. This difference becomes critical going forward, because ballots put into the mail from now on are unlikely to be delivered before November 3, and voters who fill them out will have to take them to the county drop box if they want them to be received in time to be counted.

Nonetheless, the 17-page court ruling made the specious argument that Abbott’s policy would “not

disenfranchise anyone” because voters could still put their ballots in the mail.

On Monday, the Texas Army National Guard announced it was preparing to send up to 1,000 troops to five major cities—Houston, Dallas, Ft. Worth, Austin and San Antonio—to reinforce the police in the event of disturbances following the November 3 election. Guard officers compared the action to the deployment ordered by Governor Abbott against widespread protests against police violence that erupted after the police murder of George Floyd last May.



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