

As states begin sending out ballots

Trump administration doubles down on attack on mail ballots

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Less than 8 weeks before the November 3 midterm elections, the Trump administration is escalating its drive to disenfranchise millions of working class and poor voters. The centerpiece of the White House's assault on the right to vote is its attack on mail-in voting.

Even as states began sending out ballots this week, the US Postal Service (USPS) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) filed separate emergency applications with the US Supreme Court to lift lower court rulings blocking implementation of Trump executive orders designed to sharply curtail mail-in voting and purge voter rolls.

At the same time, DHS surged an operation nominally aimed at preventing noncitizens from voting in November. This is in line with Trump's fabricated claims that hundreds of thousands of non-eligible immigrants are on state voting rolls and vote illegally in US elections—something for which there is no evidence.

The surge is being conducted by Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), an arm of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the anti-immigrant Gestapo that has occupied and terrorized towns and cities across the country; kidnapped, detained and deported hundreds of thousands of immigrants; fatally shot immigrant workers Lorenzo Salgado Araujo and Johan Sebastián Durán Guerrero; and murdered protesters Renee Nicole Good and Alex Pretti.

The states targeted by the DHS/HSI surge include Washington, Wisconsin, Missouri, Georgia, California, Pennsylvania, Nevada, New York and Connecticut.

In addition, Markwayne Mullin, the DHS secretary, last week asked the Justice Department to examine whether a commonly used voting machine can be trusted to maintain a verifiable record—an attempt to cast doubt on the reliability of voting machines and lay the ground for claiming that some electronically cast or counted votes are invalid.

In the letter to Attorney General Todd Blanche, Mullin also asked the Justice Department to investigate another key part of the election infrastructure—a multistate partnership

called the Electronic Registration Information Center, or ERIC. In Trump's effort to overturn the 2020 presidential election, he and his co-conspirators falsely claimed that ERIC was a front for left-wing groups and that Dominion voting machines were rigged to favor Joe Biden. In his prime time speech in July, Trump said such machines were “vulnerable” and “easily compromised,” and claimed that one voting machine company, Smartmatic, had ties to the Venezuelan government.

The administration recently forced out the independent members of the Election Assistance Commission, which oversees the certification of machines, and Trump has stacked the USPS Board of Governors with Republicans who parrot the lie that Biden's 2020 election victory was the result of fraud. Heather Honey, who played a prominent role in Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 election, is deputy assistant secretary for election integrity at DHS. She is a protégé of Cleta Mitchell, a lawyer who was on the January 2021 phone call in which Trump urged Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger to “find” enough votes to overturn Biden's victory in that state.

On September 6, the US Postal Service asked the Supreme Court to stay an injunction issued the previous Friday by US District Judge Indira Talwani blocking implementation of an executive order signed by Trump last March restricting mail-in voting. That order directs the secretary of Homeland Security to compile lists in each state of US citizens eligible to vote and to send the lists to the states prior to any federal election. The states are then required to send lists of all registered voters to whom they are sending mail-in and absentee ballots to the USPS. The Postal Service is tasked with verifying these lists and withholding mail ballots from voters not on the lists of citizens compiled by federal agencies.

In addition, the Department of Justice is directed to investigate and prosecute state and local election officials who issue ballots to individuals deemed by the federal

government to be ineligible to vote in federal elections. The order also directs the Postal Service to refuse to deliver mail ballots in states that do not comply with the new rules.

Last week, a report compiled by an anonymous whistleblower at USPS was made public. In it, the postal official warned that Trump's executive order, giving the Postal Service immense powers to withhold mail ballots, "could delay ballots by the thousands in repeated verification cycles, and thus prevent states from mailing enormous numbers of ballots."

In her September 4 ruling, Judge Talwani wrote that the postal policy "threatens disenfranchisement of millions of United States citizens who seek to vote by mail."

Talwani asserted that Trump's executive order overhauling the mail ballot system was unconstitutional because the Constitution, in Article 1, Section 4, explicitly delegates the power to conduct federal elections to the states, with Congress empowered to make alterations in regulations. No power is granted to the executive branch in relation to elections.

Numerous state attorneys general, election officials and voting rights organizations have warned that attempting to implement the sweeping changes demanded in Trump's executive order this late in the election cycle will sow mass confusion and chaos. North Carolina, Delaware and Alabama have already begun sending mail ballots, and 19 more states are set to mail ballots to voters by September 19.

In a court filing, Tammy Patrick, chief programs officer at the National Association of Election Officials, called making the required changes in time for this year's election "effectively impossible."

A coalition of voter service and civic groups, represented by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in the lawsuit, wrote:

USPS has no authority in the Constitution or federal law over how states administer mail voting. And the president cannot order the Postal Service to create a disruptive new bureaucracy that will throw the election into chaos and disenfranchise untold numbers of voters.

However, opinion polls show the Republicans losing the midterm elections badly, and one of the aims of the White House's full-court press against mail-in voting is precisely to foment the maximum level of chaos. Trump is preparing to exploit such conditions to either suspend the vote, mobilize ICE and federal troops to the polls to intimidate voters, or declare the outcome invalid and seek to overturn

it.

This is, after all, the same fascist who organized a mob of insurrectionists on January 6, 2021, to overthrow the 2020 election along with the Constitution, and retain power on the basis of dictatorial rule. He met with no resistance from the supposed opposition party, the Democrats, and was allowed by them to retake power four years later.

The Supreme Court said it would accept the USPS filing and arguments from its opponents by September 8 and rule sometime later, very possibly by the end of this week.

The second emergency appeal was filed by the DHS on Tuesday. It asked the Supreme Court to set aside a ruling the previous Friday, by a divided panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, keeping in place a temporary freeze on a new federal database of voter information stemming from an executive order signed by Trump in March of 2025. The appeals court ruled that the database could violate laws shielding Social Security information. The Supreme Court gave the challengers until September 15 to respond to the Trump administration request.

Under the 2025 executive order, data from the Social Security Administration is to be folded into a Homeland Security database known as the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE), in order to more effectively purge voter rolls and expand the dossiers on US citizens as well as immigrants.

"The stakes could not be higher: Millions of Americans' sensitive personal information and the integrity of our elections are on the line, just weeks before the midterm elections," said Skye Perryman, the president and chief executive of Democracy Forward, which represents the challengers.

In her June 2026 ruling, Washington D.C. federal district judge Sparkle L. Sooknanan wrote that "states have partnered with the federal government to access the database and are actively removing United States citizens from voter rolls based on inaccurate information." The order violated privacy protections built into the Social Security Act and other laws, Sooknanan said.



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