

Is Our Voting System Archaic?

by

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Since the beginning of our nation in 1776, the voting process has seen many changes. The ignition processes involved either raising hands or replying a Yea or Nay verbal response. Both processes relied on visual or audio interpretation as to the winner,” and are still in use today.

The outcome of these two voting processes relies heavily on how much trust the “audience” has in the “counter” to render an accurate assessment of the vote. The process in both cases is highly inaccurate and relies in interpreting how many hands are raised or balancing out the volume of the yeas verses the nays.

Because of such inaccuracies, along came the paper ballot. Initially entries in the ballots were hand-written, and later on were printed with check boxes. With the development of personal or portable computers, the voting process quickly became computerized. Voters would go to a “voting booth,” and vote by pushing buttons.

Eventually the push buttons were replaced by “touch screen” technology, which is still in use today.

While touch screen voting booths made it easier for the casting of votes, voting issues and problems continued to exist. There were accusations of votes not being counted by the computer programs, and of the programs being hacked and manipulated to present a desired outcome. A paper trail of a person’s vote did not exist and led to many accusations of voting misconduct and fraud.

In response to the accusations, voting machines were redesigned to use the same touch screen technology and when the voter clicked the submit button, their vote was recorded on a “voter ticket.” The ticket is then placed into a vote counting computer which either optically or magnetically recorded the vote(s) and the ticket itself is stored for safekeeping.

Even this new approach had its problems. Accusations of voter fraud, misconduct by the voting agencies, and computer program manipulation continued. Many of the voting machines and programs used were developed and purchased from other countries.

Voting issues increased dramatically in 2020 with the COVID pandemic. Since voters could not go to the polls, states suspended or rewrote the mail-in ballot regulations.

Consequently, more than twice the numbers of voters (43%) used mail-in ballots in 2020 as compared to the 21% in 2016.. Election offices across the country were caught understaffed and additional election issues arose.

Since most states did not return to pre-pandemic mail-in ballot regulations, many voters used mail-in ballots for the mid-term elections. Although mail-in ballots are still being counted, mail-in ballots counted for about 19% of the total votes in Florida’s Duval County. This may or may not be reflective of the nation.

Several states continued having many of the same voting problems during the mid-term elections as they did with the 2020 presidential election.

Voter Participation by Year and Type

Year	Presidential	Year	Midterm
2020	66.3%	2022	46.0%
2016	60.1%	2018	50.3%

Washington Post

The problems with mail-in ballots are:

- Counting and recording the votes takes a lot of time
- Hand counting votes cost a lot of taxpayer money
- Large “bundles” of ballots are often misplaced
- Opens the counting process to fraud and misconduct

The question that arises after every election is, “Is there a way that voting process can be changed in order to reduce fraud and misconduct, and at the same time meet needs and desires of voters?” The answer is a definitive **“YES!”**

For years, proponents of increased voting security have pushed for the requirement for voters to present a photo ID when voting. Several groups have fought against the photo ID concept citing various reasons including the most popular reason that such a requirement denies the poor access to voting. Only 7 states currently require a photo id when voting. So how do states insure that the person who is voting is a valid voter?

Many states require some form of photo identification when registering to vote. These forms include:

- Driver’s licenses
- State-issued ID cards
- Military ID cards
- Passports

Other states may accept some type of non-photo ID such as:

- Birth certificates
- Social Security cards
- Bank statements
- Utility bills
- Tax bills

The above methods are all open to fraud and criminal misconduct. In 2005, Congress enacted the “REAL ID Act,” establishing a set of national standards for identification. This is the first step in developing a national identification database that will probably be “enhanced” with other personal data and information. The question of using the Real Id for voting purposes will probably be challenged on the same basis as any other photo ID.

So let’s look at another approach. This approach will require cooperation between cities, counties, state, and federal governments.

Since it is claimed that requiring a photo id in order to vote will disenfranchise a group of eligible voters (mainly the poor), this approach gets around that situation. Before discussing it, let’s look at the requirements you must meet in order to vote. There are 3 basic requirements you must have:

- Be a U.S. citizen
- Have established residency in the state where you are casting your vote
- Be at least 18 years of age

Other requirements depending on where you live may include:

- Not be in jail or prison for a felony conviction.
- Mental capacity
- Motor Voter laws
- Literacy tests
- Tax payments

When looking at these requirements, and assuming that all have some form of documentation, there would probably be 3 things common to each requirement:

- First name
- Last name
- Social security number

Almost every government agency identifies us by our social security number and almost all Americans have a social security number (SSN).

According to the Social Security Administration (SSA), of the 14.7% of Americans over 62 about 4% (approx. 1.1 million) of them do not receive social security benefits. That is about one-half of a percent of Americans. The SSA did not clarify how many of the 4% do not have a SSN, nor did the SSA indicate what percentage of people under 62, if any, do not have a SSN. SSNs started being assigned regularly to newborn children in 1987.

In addition to the SSN, the SSA also associated the number with the person's name and date of birth.

While details need to be worked out, the basic concept of this new voting process revolves around using technology and a voter's SSN. Following is a basic outline of the process:

1. Voter receives SSN at some age
2. SSA records number, name and date of birth
3. SSA distributes a database containing voter identification information to states
4. States create, per federal guidelines, a voter website
5. Voters log into website and are "authenticated."
6. This is where the process splits based on authentication
 - a. If authenticated, voter votes and receives email as to how they voted
 - b. If not authenticated, voter is presented with reason (see below)
7. States tabulate voter results

Why use this approach?

- Every American (with exception of those discussed earlier) have a social security number. Immigrants, legal or illegal, do not get social security numbers but rather immigration numbers and cannot vote because they are not American citizens.
- It uses current technology
- The process reduces chances of votes not being counted (removes the middle person)
- Voter registration offices are eliminated and/or staff reduced

The authentication process

Authentication processes are used to determine whether someone is, in fact, they say they are. These processes have been in use since before World War 2.

Today authentication technology is used to control access to computer or network systems by checking to see if a user's credentials match the credentials in a database of authorized users.

Most people have experienced the process when access online financial institutions or their online shopping accounts. The most common approach is for a person to sign into their account and receive either a text message or email with a 5-6 digit number that they then enter into their account. This approach however is not conducive to online voting as phones are lost and some people do not have text capable phones. Other reasons for not using phones also persist.

The military and Medicare used to print SSNs on their id cards but have switched over to using numbers that replace the SSN on the cards.

The IRS requires SSNs on the 1040 forms, but when submitting a tax return online, the taxpayers submit their own digital code that is used in conjunction with the SSN to communicate with the IRS.

The online voting system would utilize SSNs for identification. The systems can also use a variety of other checks such as addresses, parent names, etc. Most of these other checks however are easily discoverable, thus a "secret" code should be incorporated into the authentication process.

This "secret" code could be incorporated into the SSA's database and be generated by the individual. The code could be required to be changed with each voting event.

From a federal and/or state perspective, once a voter enters their SSN and secret code, the computer program will verify it against the SSA database and other databases such as a state's DMV database or revenue department.

If a voter cannot be verified, they would be immediately notified and will have XX number of days to prove their verification/identity through in-person interviews with an election office.

Once verified they can vote and any duplicate SSNs would be investigated accordingly.

As technology develops the verification process would be updated. It is important that any update does **NOT** involve implantation or marking of any individual. It is possible that future verification could be done via biometric technology.

Perceived issues with this approach

There will always be those who will claim that some group will be disenfranchised by the system. So let's look at some of the perceived issues.

Voters do not have a computer

This will probably be the initial claim, especially as it relates to the lower income population. However it is a false claim for several reasons.

Currently voters either go to a voting precinct or use mail-in ballots. If they go to a precinct, they can go to a public library, school, or college instead. If they use mail-in ballots, smart phones can be used to access online voting. Eight federal and local government programs give away cell phones, so not having a cell phone is no longer an excuse for a group to be disenfranchised.

Voters are transient

This will probably be the second excuse. However it is again a false claim.

The American population is always on the move. People may move from one house to another in the area they live in, or from one city to another within the same state, or even mover from one state to another. Regardless of how people mover from one location to another, they should notify the post office of any address changes. While notifying the post office is not mandatory, **all** states require notification of any address changes.

Since states require address changes it is also a good idea to submit changes to other organizations such as: your bank, IRS, SSA, employer, insurance companies, etc.

Federal and state agencies can work together to seamlessly keep track of current addresses. This would be important for the next excuse.

Stolen or duplicate SSN

Of all the excuses for not implementing this process, duplicate of stolen SSN is probably the one with the greatest credence.

According to CBS News:

- 6.1 percent of Americans have at least two SSNs
- More than 100,000 Americans have five or more SSNs
- More than 15 percent of SSNs are associated with two or more people
- More than 140,000 SSNs are associated with five or more people
- More than 27,000 SSNs are associated with 10 or more people

Fraud accounts for about 15% to 20% of the total, where applicants deliberately provide the wrong social security number.

This problem however can be overcome using an appropriate authentication process.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that other issues will be raised in order to prevent a more secure voting system in the US. While all of these issues can be resolved, socialists and communist organizations such as the ACLU will continue their attempt to quash any improved voting system, whether it be implementing photo ids or emerging technology.

We need to keep in mind that if socialism takes over the government, the socialists will implement many of the programs that they have opposed in order to gain greater control over the people.