



Let's Build: Freedom. Fairness. Future

To: Interested Parties  
From: Future Majority  
Re: Vote by mail is under attack. But it's the right thing to do.  
Date: April 16, 2020

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*"Mail ballots -- they cheat. Okay? People cheat. Mail ballots are a very dangerous thing for this country 'cause there are cheaters. They go and collect them. They're fraudulent in many cases."*

In the latest falsehood that needs correcting, the President of the United States has cast a threatening shadow over voting by mail, and in turn has done little to hide his disdain for making the fundamental right to vote more accessible in this country. Mail ballots are not dangerous, nor do people cheat when they cast their vote by mail. Just ask the president himself, who voted absentee by mail in Florida while in the White House.

But in the height of a global pandemic, he and those with a vested interest in seeing fewer people vote are using the crisis to ratchet up their voter suppression efforts. **Their latest attack: vote by mail.**

#### **What is it?**

Vote by mail (VBM) is the process of conducting elections by mail. Registered voters receive a ballot in the mail, make their selections and mail the ballot back to the state or drop it off at a designated, secure location. Voters have weeks to mark and send back their ballots and still have the opportunity to vote in person, but 90% of voters use the mail option. Currently, five states use entirely VBM systems -- Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington, and Utah. Another 28 states allow for no excuse absentee voting by mail, in which voters must request a mail ballot. The remaining 17 states allow voters to request and receive a mail ballot but only for cause.

VBM has entered the national consciousness as the COVID-19 pandemic ravages the country and puts in-person voting in question as it poses a public health risk. Many states delayed or outright canceled in-person voting for their primary elections, but a big question mark still remains around November's general elections. A preview of the fight went down in Wisconsin, where the Democratic Governor attempted to delay in-person voting in the state for its April 7th primary, but the Republican legislature and the courts refused to allow that to happen, forcing the elections to continue and denying an extension to return absentee ballots.

While Democrats will push for a national vote-by-mail policy, it has essentially no chance of passing out of the Republican Senate. So, it is safe to say we will see the battle over VBM continue in state capitols around the country and be arbitrated by the courts. Two of the most crucial swing states, Michigan and Pennsylvania, recently passed laws that will for the first time allow no-excuse absentee voting in a general election.

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### Does it work?

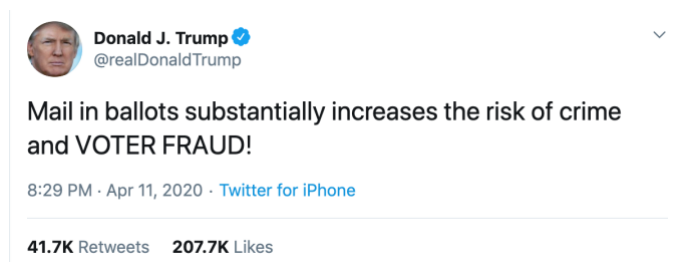
Yes. Voting by mail has been shown to be effective, safe, and a boost for participation especially among low propensity and young voters. It is a convenient method to get everyone involved in our democracy. While some argue about the costs of administering all-mail elections — and the printing costs do increase — it also lowers costs for jurisdictions without the need to pay poll workers and source voting machines across the state. Studies have shown that all-mail elections can reduce states' costs by up to 40%. Moreover, to hold in-person voting in the height of a pandemic will almost undoubtedly spike healthcare costs far beyond the paper costs.

There are real concerns with disparities in access, with mail delivery not being equitable across every zip code, and some Native American communities living on reservations share P.O. boxes sometimes do not have street addresses. These are very legitimate challenges that would need to be addressed in the months ahead. But no matter the conditions, voting by mail is a more convenient way to participate for those who have work or childcare obligations or live far from a polling location.

But what is not an issue, although it will continue to be spun into one, is that VBM causes security or fraud concerns. There is no evidence to back this up. More on this below.

### Who is attacking it and why?

Trump and many elected Republicans and conservatives in the media are attacking vote by mail. Why? Look no further than the president's Twitter:





But Trump cannot provide any proof of potential fraud — because there isn't any. The [Brennan Center for Justice has found](#) that voter fraud exists between 0.00004% and 0.0009% of votes. Trump's own commission to investigate voter fraud was disbanded without finding any evidence of it.

CNN reporter Jim Acosta [pressed him on this very question](#), and Trump warned, "We're going to find out about the proof." In other words, don't be surprised if the Attorney General's office launches an investigation into how VBM can purportedly lead to fraud. What is really the issue, as the president noted in the above tweet, is that VBM will likely increase turnout, and increased turnout is presumptively a boon to Democratic candidates.

Moreover, vote by mail is more secure than in-person voting. Mail-in ballots are not vulnerable to hacking as electronic voting machines are. And the charges that VBM is partisan is not true – Utah, a red state, is 100% vote by mail, and there is no partisan divide in terms of which voters take up absentee voting in states that allow it with no excuse.

### **Why should we look to vote by mail now, more than ever?**

Vote by mail is in normal times good public policy that makes participating in elections easier and more convenient. It allows voters to make their decisions in the comfort of their home and take time to read about the issues for which they are casting a ballot. It also is very popular: 70% of Americans in key battleground states are [supportive](#) of no-excuse absentee voting and 65% of Americans overall [support](#) vote by mail. And in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, two-thirds of Americans are otherwise [uncomfortable](#) about voting at in person a polling place.

But there is no time like a public health crisis to make sure that our elections are safe and accessible. And VBM can do just that. Voting by mail should not be reserved for the select few like the president and his family -- every single American has the right to vote, and to do so safely. Any efforts to deny Americans' access to voting amounts to voter suppression and is a threat to the founding principles of our democracy.

With our patchwork electoral system, and with many states not already geared up for VBM elections, it will take a substantial investment to stand up all-mail elections by the general elections. But if the pandemic peaks again in November, the investments will be well worth it.