

# Voter suppression

PROGRESSIVE VIEWS



Laura Bray

If you care about preserving and protecting your voting rights – Quit. Voting. Republican.

If the only way your party can win is by making it harder for “others” to vote, you’re doing democracy wrong.

Democracy works best when everyone who is eligible to vote can do so. Making it harder to vote is anathema to this principle.

The April 7 Wisconsin primary laid bare the plans of Republicans, under their false cover of “voter fraud.” The Democratic governor tried to extend the deadline for absentee voting due to COVID-19 and was thwarted by a ruling from the Republican-dominated Wisconsin Supreme Court (a ruling subsequently upheld by the US Supreme Court).

Due to a lack of election workers, the number of polling locations in Milwaukee – with a significant African American population – were slashed from 180 to five, creating hours-long lines.

Forty years ago, a major architect of the conservative agenda, Paul Weyrich (1942-2008) said, “I don’t want everybody to vote. ... As a matter of fact, our leverage in the elections quite candidly goes up as the voting populace goes down.”

On March 30 on Fox News, even the president said this quiet part out loud (“you’d never have a Republican elected in this country again” with more people voting). In January 2018, the president disbanded his own investigatory committee on voter fraud when it found no evidence of such fraud.

Eric Lutz, writing in *Vanity Fair*, reported in early April on proposals in Georgia that would drive up turnout. The Republican Georgia State House speaker again said the quiet part out loud: “This will be extremely devastating to Republicans and conservatives.”

Republican voter suppression efforts are not and never have been about voter fraud, and now their own words prove it.

On the day of the primary, Wisconsin Speaker of the House Robin Vos told his constituents that they were “incredibly safe to go out” — while his accompanying photo on Twitter showed him attired in full protective gear most voters have no access to. The four conservative Wisconsin Supreme Court justices who overruled the Democratic governor all voted absentee. And the U.S. Supreme Court is not meeting in person due to the virus. But sure, it’s safe for you to go out in a crowd and vote.

Some good news in the midst of this travesty: Wisconsin voters braved those long lines and miserable weather to vote in droves and elect a progressive justice to the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

The SCOTUS support of the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling will embolden Republicans in states across the U.S. to intensify their efforts to suppress the vote. Democrats in the U.S. Congress must act now to decisively to prevent those efforts from succeeding.

The fiasco in Wisconsin was just the latest in a long string of Republican efforts to suppress the vote. From Texas’s strict voter ID law to purges of voter rolls to radical gerrymandering (in the Wisconsin legislative election in 2018, Democratic candidates received nearly 200,000 more votes than Republicans, but the Republicans hold a 64-35 majority) to Florida’s poll tax for ex-felons, the Republicans, in Texas and across the country, have clearly shown their intentions.

According to Amanda Marcotte of *Salon*, “The rise of authoritarianism on the right has coincided with conser-

vatives’ growing realization that Republicans can’t win elections fair and square anymore. Republican politicians see fewer people voting as an important goal, in and of itself.”

The presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden has expressed his support of measures to help increase turnout, including remote voting.

“This is about making sure that we’re able to conduct our democracy while we’re dealing with a pandemic. We can do both,” he said in early April.

In a statement, the Democratic National Committee said, “Ensuring that Americans can vote during the COVID-19 crisis is fundamental to maintaining our democracy. It is shocking that Trump is essentially admitting that when the American people vote, Republicans lose. Trump knows that suppressing the vote is the only way he and Republicans win in November.”

Our local elected – Rep. Chip Roy (TX-21), Sen. Donna Campbell (TX Senate 25), and Rep. Kyle Biedermann (TX House 73)—all actively work to suppress the vote. In letters to constituents, Sen. Campbell’s office cites “voter fraud” as a reason not to implement wider vote-by-mail opportunities, despite the lack of evidence. None of these electeds are interested in making it easier for people to vote.

To find out more about how to get involved to make sure all eligible voters can make it to the polls safely, visit [www.kcdems.us](http://www.kcdems.us)

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