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## Intimidation and suppression

### PROGRESSIVE VIEWS



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Perhaps you've seen the parades through town supporting the current occupant of the White House. These events are less about showing support for the Republican presidential candidate and more about intimidation – convincing you that your vote doesn't count so you don't bother to vote.

As President Obama said during the recent Democratic National Convention, "This president and those in power – those who benefit from keeping things the way they are – they are counting on your cynicism. They know they can't win you over with their policies. So they're hoping to make it as hard as possible for you to vote, and to convince you that your vote doesn't matter. That's how they win. That's how a democracy withers, until it's no democracy at all. We can't let that happen. Do not let them take away your power."

Last Friday, Texas Public Radio reported that "Officials with the nonpartisan League of Women Voters of Texas (LWVT) say their volunteers are no longer allowed to leave voter registration forms at U.S. post offices."

The website of the Texas secretary of state clearly states that voters can "pick up applications at libraries, government offices or high schools."

With access restricted to schools and libraries due to COVID, access to these forms at government offices – of which the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) is one – is more critical than ever. A USPS spokesman said its policy had "not changed," but the LWVT president said the response "doesn't make any sense," as they've been allowed to drop off blank forms in the past.

In my "Voter Suppression" column that ran April 24, I said, "If you care about preserving and protecting your voting rights – quit voting for Republicans. If the only way your party can win is by making it harder for 'others' to vote, you're doing democracy wrong."

According to Amanda Marcotte of Salon, "The rise of authoritarianism on the right has coincided with conservatives'

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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."

"Trump and his Republican enablers are putting voter suppression front and center – fear-mongering about voting by mail, escalating their Election Day poll watching and so-called ballot-security operations, and blocking funding to prepare the country for a pandemic-era election," said Andy Kroll in Rolling Stone.

ACLU Texas has an excellent website (<https://bit.ly/2QGVpDG>) on voting rights that presents a variety of scenarios ("Someone is interfering with my right to vote") with informative links to address the situation (in the example, the voter should call 1-866-OUR-VOTE).

Only one party is trying to intimidate voters and make it harder for people to register to vote; Democrats are trying to make it easier. Here's just a sampling of recent Republican efforts:

- On August 28, a U.S. District Court judge ruled that Texas "continues to violate the federal National Voter Registration Act (the 'motor voter law') by not allowing residents to register to vote when they update their driver's license information online," according to Alexa Ura in the Texas Tribune. The judge "ordered the state to set up a 'fully operable' online system by September 23." (Note that the voter registration deadline for the fall general election is October 5.)

- In a media interview on August 27, the president "suggested ... that it will be election workers who will botch the tally in November," according to Rebecca Shabad of NBC News, offering no evidence to support his claim.

- As I stated in my August 21 column, Texas is one of only nine states that require a reason to vote by mail-in ballot. Other states, especially during the pandemic, are allowing all their residents to vote by mail, no questions asked.

- Forty (!) states offer online voter registration. Twenty-one states offer same-day (on election day) voter registration. Texas offers neither, further limiting the ability for people to register.

- In 2019, the Texas Legislature passed HB 1888, which required that all early voting locations remain open for the entirety of the early voting period. It was passed in an effort to curtail campus voting in San Marcos, but it had the knock-on effect of eliminating the one day of early voting typically offered in Comfort. This makes voting more difficult, in contravention of the Texas Election Code.

To sign up to take action against voter suppression and intimidation, visit [www.kcdems.us/act20](http://www.kcdems.us/act20)

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