

Written Testimony
To the House Administration Committee
Rep. Bryan Steil, Chairman
By
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Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The American system of self-governance is under attack.

Instead of an Election Day where everyone votes at the same time and with the same full set of information, votes are counted quickly, and everyone promptly knows and trusts the outcome, we now have lengthy election seasons that can last months prior to and even after Election Day. The situation is so absurd that we have presidential and gubernatorial debates weeks after some people have voted.

Instead of having total security and a verifiable chain of custody for ballots being issued, cast, and counted, we flood addresses across the country with tens of millions of unsupervised mail-in ballots months ahead of elections, frequently to locations from which voters, if they're even alive, have long since moved.

Instead of having election administration that is rigorously nonpartisan and impartial under the law, we have allowed the private takeover of government election offices by partisan oligarchs and their armies of activists who use those offices and their authorities to tilt the election toward favored candidates.

Instead of voters being able to vote for the candidate of their choice, powerful interests backed by wealthy oligarchs are working to remove the most popular candidate -- and the ruling party's chief opponent from the ballot -- in a move reminiscent of Soviet Russia.¹ And if that weren't enough, instead of the top candidates chosen by the people being able to fully engage in a vigorous campaign heading into the election, we have one side actively attempting to throw its opponent in prison and bankrupt his family, moves that are also reminiscent of Soviet Russia.

Instead of a system of rule of law that gives Americans the same rights and due process, the Department of Justice and other partisan actors prosecute their political opposition -- whether powerful or lowly -- and do so only in places where partisan courts and juries will ensure a quick conviction.

¹<https://thefederalist.com/2024/02/06/meet-the-two-groups-behind-plot-to-kick-trump-off-the-ballot-and-he-isnt-the-only-target/>

Instead of a free and independent press that shares news and information to inform voters on crucial matters, we have a press that is almost exclusively the arm of one political party and is so corrupt that it is willing to perpetrate hoax after hoax against opposition party members.

Instead of a vibrant public square where Americans can debate issues and express their strongly held views, we have an elaborate censorship industrial complex where the government works hand in hand with tech oligarchs to suppress and blacklist debate on all the important issues that contribute to election outcomes. This is something I know firsthand because my own government worked with tech companies to censor me for my election reporting.²

Allowing just one of these attacks to infect our electoral system would be a crisis. Allowing all of them at the same time is an existential threat to our system of self-government.

In my best-selling book on how election administration has been co-opted by groups seeking political power, I reported on a new phenomenon in the 2020 election that has already severely eroded trust and needs to be addressed decisively. In the last presidential election, nonprofit groups with strong ties to the Democrat Party -- and funded by one of the world's wealthiest and most powerful men, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg -- took over government election offices, most notably in the Democrat areas of swing states.³ Since then, the efforts by partisans to further infiltrate government election offices to ensure favorable outcomes have only increased.

According to the most recent census data, more than 12 percent of residents move every year⁴ and a 2012 Pew study found that about one out of every eight voter registrations in America are "no longer valid or are significantly inaccurate."⁵ As a result, many ballots circulate for weeks before Election Day, and elections are increasingly being decided by technologically sophisticated ballot harvesting operations that parachute into decisive battlegrounds and scare up enough votes from otherwise unmotivated voters to overcome the natural enthusiasm of informed and self-motivated voters who make the effort to get to the polls.

While aggressive ballot harvesting by political parties and interest groups is certainly concerning, the 2020 election saw the advent of something far more sinister. A sophisticated national partisan turnout operation funded by an activist billionaire and run by ideological statisticians ran get-out-the-vote and ballot harvesting operations to benefit Democrats directly out of local election offices.

In 2020, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and his wife Priscilla Chan distributed \$328 million in grants known as "Zuck Bucks" to local election offices -- and another \$69.5 million to state election offices -- ostensibly to help local election infrastructure cope with the COVID crisis.⁶ However, these grants were distributed via two progressive groups: the Center for Tech and Civic Life (CTCL), whose entire budget as recently as 2018 had been a comparatively paltry \$1.4 million,⁷ and the Center for Election Innovation

²<https://thefederalist.com/2023/11/07/government-censorship-op-targeted-the-federalists-mollie-hemingway-sean-davis-during-2020-election/>

³<https://www.amazon.com/Rigged-Media-Democrats-Seized-Elections/dp/168451259X>

⁴<https://www.census.gov/acs/www/about/why-we-ask-each-question/migration/>

⁵<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2012/02/14/inaccurate-costly-and-inefficient-evidence-that-americas-voter-registration-system-needs-an-upgrade>

⁶<https://www.influencewatch.org/for-profit/chan-zuckerberg-initiative/>

⁷<https://nypost.com/2021/10/13/how-mark-zuckerberg-helped-swing-the-electorate-in-the-2020-election/>

and Research (CEIR), which is run by left-wing activist David Becker.⁸ One of CTCL's founders is Tiana Epps-Johnson, who had also been an Obama Foundation fellow as well as an employee at the Voting Rights Project for the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, an advocacy group which received funding from George Soros and some of the biggest left-wing foundations in the country. Epps-Johnson founded CTCL with Whitney May and Donny Bridges. All three worked on election-related activism together at the New Organizing Institute, which The Washington Post described as "the Democratic Party's Hogwarts for digital wizardry."⁹

Not surprisingly, these Democratic party activists "awarded all larger grants – on both an absolute and per capita basis to deeply Democratic urban areas," particularly in swing states, according to a report by William Doyle, research director at the Caesar Rodney Election Research Institute, and Alex Oliver, chief data scientist at Evolving Strategies, a nonpartisan research group.¹⁰

After being criticized for exploiting local government election offices to juice Democratic voter turnout, Zuckerberg commissioned his own report highlighting the fact that "more Republican jurisdictions, defined as municipalities that voted for Trump in 2020, applied for and received grants."¹¹

However, this was deeply misleading. Republican jurisdictions were far more likely to receive grants of less than \$50,000, and these small grants comprised just 27% of the center's awards. To give you an idea of how stark the difference was, Georgia alone received 10 of the top 50 grants per capita, totaling \$41 million, which is more than 10% of the \$328 million CTCL spent on the entire country. Nine of those grants went to counties with an average partisan lean of 35 points in favor of Joe Biden.¹²

In 2016, Donald Trump won Georgia by five points, but in 2020, following the massive infusion of Zuckerberg's cash, he came up around 11,000 votes short of winning the state again.¹³ On average, counties in Georgia that were funded by Zuck Bucks saw an increase in the Democratic share of the vote that was more than twice that of counties that did not receive any Zuck Bucks funding.¹⁴

Similarly, what happened in Georgia played out in other swing states. For instance, the CTCL awarded a total of \$10.1 million in grants in Wisconsin, but nearly \$8.5 million of that went to just five cities of Green Bay, Kenosha, Madison, Milwaukee, and Racine – cities where Biden's average margin of victory was over 37 points.¹⁵ Wisconsin was another state that Trump won in 2016 that he very narrowly lost in 2020.

Ultimately, Doyle and Oliver's report concludes that "the distribution of the CTCL program's grant amounts – both in absolute and per capita terms – shows, unequivocally, a systematic bias in favor of Democratic jurisdictions."¹⁶ And further, the larger grants that were awarded revealed a "partisan

⁸<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/center-for-election-innovation-research/>

⁹<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/center-for-tech-and-civic-life/>

¹⁰https://www.realclearinvestigations.com/articles/2022/06/07/team_zuckerberg_masks_the_heavily_pro-democrat_tilt_of_2020_election_zuck_bucks_study_finds_835470.html

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/11/03/us/elections/results-georgia.html>

¹⁴<https://thefga.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/How-Zuckerbucks-Influenced-the-Georgia-Elections.pdf>

¹⁵https://www.realclearinvestigations.com/articles/2022/06/07/team_zuckerberg_masks_the_heavily_pro-democrat_tilt_of_2020_election_zuck_bucks_study_finds_835470.html

¹⁶Ibid.

pattern of funding [that] was especially apparent in swing states.” Overall, a county that voted for Biden was over 3.5 times more likely to be funded by CTCL than a county Trump won. Trump counties received an average of \$0.59 per capita in Zuck Bucks, while Biden counties received \$2.85 per capita.¹⁷

The money given to local election offices was rarely spent on COVID-related issues. For instance, the three counties that received the most Zuck Buck funding spent only 1.3 percent of that funding on personal protective equipment. The bulk of the money was spent on items such as salaries, laptops, vehicle rentals, attorneys’ fees, mail-in balloting, and other measures that allowed elections offices to hire activists to work the election.¹⁸

And CTCL leveraged Zuck Bucks to play a direct role in running elections in critical areas. In Green Bay, Wisconsin, emails to the mayor’s office from the center touted its “network of current and former election administrations and election experts available” and expertise in “vote by mail processes,” and promised they would “ensure forms, envelopes, and other materials are understood and completed correctly by voters.” Green Bay’s city government would eventually outsource critical election responsibilities to CTCL. In an email dated July of 2020, the chief of staff for Green Bay Mayor Eric Genrich wrote, “As far as I’m concerned I am taking all of my cues from CTCL and work with those you recommend.”¹⁹

CTCL eventually helped install an out-of-state operative named Michael Spitzer-Rubenstein in Green Bay and other Wisconsin election offices. Spitzer-Rubenstein engaged in questionable activities for someone who was not a public official, such as asking for direct access to the Milwaukee Election Commission’s voter database. Green Bay City Clerk Kris Teske took leave a few weeks before the election and quit shortly after. She cited Spitzer-Rubenstein assuming her responsibilities as one reason why.

“[Green Bay Mayor Genrich] had [an] agenda when it came to the election and I nor the Clerk’s Office were included even though it’s the Clerk’s job to administer an election,” Teske wrote in an email. “He allowed staff who were not educated on election law to run the election, along with people who weren’t even City of Green Bay employees.”²⁰

Green Bay was not the only example of Democratic politicians abusing Zuck Bucks. Broad and Liberty, a publication dedicated to Pennsylvania politics, obtained emails showing that the office of Pennsylvania’s Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf coordinated with left-wing nonprofits to implement a secretive process that selectively invited Democratic counties to apply for Zuck Bucks grants.²¹

CTCL founder Tiana Epps-Johnson told the Washington Post in 2022 the awarding of Zuck Bucks grants “reflected where the requests for funding came from, not any bias on the part of her organization.”²² But the center has not been transparent about the internal process it used for awarding grants.

¹⁷Hemingway, *Rigged*.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹https://www.realclearinvestigations.com/articles/2022/06/07/team_zuckerberg_masks_the_heavily_pro-democrat_tilt_of_2020_election_zuck_bucks_study_finds_835470.html

²⁰Ibid.

²¹<https://broadandliberty.com/2021/10/13/network-of-dark-money-groups-implemented-selective-election-grant-process-favoring-democratic-leaning-counties-emails-show/>

²²<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/02/16/election-funding-midterms/>

Since these abuses of nonpartisan government election offices were highlighted in the 2020 election, some 27 states have passed laws banning the private funding of elections.²³ However, organizations on the Left are actively trying to circumvent these bans. Late last year, The Honest Elections Project highlighted the existence of a new \$80 million organization, the U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence, designed to infiltrate local election offices and do it in a way specifically designed to get around bans on direct funding of election offices.

“County election offices that enroll in the [US Alliance for Election Excellence] receive legal and political consultation, public relations assistance, and guidance on recruitment and training,” notes an article co-authored by Jason Snead of the Honest Elections Project and Andy Jackson of the Civitas Center for Public Integrity. “Once counties are enrolled, the Alliance gathers detailed information on the offices’ inner workings and provides specific ‘improvement plans’ to reshape the way they operate. In other words, the Alliance allows the left to have deep influence on election administration.”²⁴

Some functions of government are so sacred they must not ever be overtaken by outside interests.

Free and fair elections are a crucial aspect of our Constitutional republic. Wealthy and powerful individuals messing with the integrity of our elections is a grave matter requiring careful oversight. When stated plainly, the issue here should be agreed upon by all Americans: The people counting our votes should not be partisans, and the counting of America’s votes should not be privately funded by activist billionaires.

Allowing the private takeover of government election offices undermines trust in government at the deepest levels. Everyone in Congress, regardless of party, should see this as the threat that it is and come together and put a stop to it.

²³<https://capitalresearch.org/article/states-banning-zuck-bucks/>

²⁴<https://www.carolinajournal.com/opinion/progressive-groups-finding-ways-around-ncs-zuck-bucks-ban/>