

Congresswoman Claudia Tenney Testimony to Committee on House Administration

I would like to thank Chairperson Lofgren, Ranking Member Davis, and the distinguished members of this committee for giving Members the opportunity to share their priorities with you today.

The integrity of our elections is essential to the functioning of our constitutional republic. Over the generations countless Americans have fought, marched, and died to protect and expand this sacred right. Therefore, it is essential for the American people to know that their elections are fair and that only legal votes are counted.

However, over the past several years the essential trust in this sacred institution has been tarnished.

First by progressives who questioned the legitimacy of the 2016 election for no other reason than they disliked the individual elected. That's the opposite of democracy. Then there was an unprecedented lack of transparency as well as politically motivated policies that undermined confidence in the 2020 pandemic election and led to numerous errors.

Residents of New York's 22nd Congressional District saw these shortcomings firsthand. This last year my congressional race took almost three months to decide. Hasty rule changes and bureaucratic incompetence left approximately 700,000 Americans without representation in Congress for over a month. These are not the experiences that instill faith in our system. They

undermine the trust needed for the functioning of a representative system of government. To prevent this from happening again, I founded and currently co-Chair the Congressional Election Integrity Caucus, which educates Members on these issues and advocates for common sense reforms and solutions to ensure secure elections.

Thankfully, we have proven examples to pull from, as many states have acted to shore up their electoral systems. This includes enacting commonsense voter ID laws, updating voter rolls, banning ballot harvesting, and requiring all votes to be counted on election night. However, these critical measures face resistance from political forces across the country, including here in this body and on this committee. These partisans seek to centralize electoral administration and undermine the basic security of our elections.

The first such effort in the House was the passage of H.R. 1, which aimed to completely upend our federalized elections system, centralizing it here in Washington, DC. This bill would undermine the authority of states to make their own voter registration and election laws as well as empower partisans to overturn reforms by democratically elected state and local officials.

First, this misguided legislation would ban state voter ID laws, eliminating an essential and commonsense safeguard many states have enacted to secure voting integrity. Next, it would eliminate the bipartisan structure of the Federal Election Commission, reducing its size from six to five and allowing it to partake in partisan enforcement actions. Last, it would mandate the legalization of no-fault absentee ballots, ban witness signature or notarization requirements, and force states to accept absentee ballots up to 10 days *after* an election.

These changes would blast open the path for voter fraud, enabling bad faith political actors to simply create the votes they need. Paired with the mandate to legalize ballot harvesting, it makes you wonder what the drafters of this legislation's thought process really was. Even if you do not agree with this criticism, you must acknowledge that making voters wait weeks after an election to know the result will only undermine trust in our election system and hamper political representation.

Now that this legislation has thankfully stalled in the Senate, House Democratic leadership is pushing forward their equally misguided H.R. 4. This bill would completely centralize the control of elections with unelected bureaucrats in the Department of Justice. Providing them the power to veto changes of polling place locations, voter ID and registration requirements, and the redistricting in every state. Finally, this bill would also create a new "practice-based preclearance" requirements that would apply to all political jurisdictions whether or not they are included under the new unjustifiably strict 10-year coverage formula. With these changes no state or local government would be safe to freely adjust their elections system, even if they are acting good faith to meet the needs of their citizens.

Instead of these unwise bills, Congress should focus on reforms that respect the rights of states while also repairing actual shortcomings in election integrity. As an example, during the 2020 Election, Mark Zuckerberg, poured approximately \$350 million into the Center for Tech and Civic Life, a left-leaning non-profit. This money was then funneled directly to Boards of Elections, completely bypassing any accountability or oversight from state legislators or local

governments. In addition, this money went disproportionately to Democrat districts, selectively driving up turnout in these areas while ignoring more conservative or rural areas.

In response, I led my colleagues in introducing H.R. 4290, the End Zuckerbucks Act. This legislation will prohibit 501(c)(3) tax exempt organizations from providing direct funding to official election organizations. The right to vote is sacred. The administration of our elections should be in the hands of the American citizens, not the highest bidder or wealthiest Silicon Valley donor.

Another topic that deserves our attention is the continuation of the so-called “temporary” election rules enacted in many states in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of these rules were enacted without or against the will of state legislatures.

In New York, these new rules threw elections laws into chaos. They also burdened our local Boards of Elections with having to implement onerous and expensive new systems without additional resources. These are the primary causes for which the election in New York’s 22nd Congressional District had to spend months in court before being decided.

This is a bigger issue than any of us. We must act to ensure Americans once again trust their political systems and that they have a voice in their representation. Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you all today. I look forward to working with you all in the months and years to come to ensure voting is both accessible and secure.