

## REQUIRE ALL BALLOTS TO BE RETURNED BY ELECTION DAY

Americans expect their elections to be adjudicated swiftly and fairly. For example, a recent Rasmussen poll finds that 82% of Americans believe that ballots should be returned to officials by Election Day. Although slow communications in our Nation's century led to some drawn-out election processes, it should be possible in modern America to know an election's outcome on the evening of Election Day. Delaying election results by days and weeks creates more opportunities for fraud and injects uncertainty and public skepticism into the election process.

During the 2020 election, 60,000 ballots were received in Pennsylvania a full three days after Election Day. They were not alone. Twenty-one states allow ballots to be counted if received after the polls close on Election Day. Residents in Virginia had 45 days to vote in their most recent statewide elections, but some people claimed this was still not enough time to count the votes. Attorneys sued Virginia to allow 10 more days of counting.

A large majority of Americans are already skeptical of the electoral system—for good reason. From 2018 to 2020, voter confidence in the accuracy of elections fell to just 59%, dropping 11% in only two years. Ensuring ballots are counted accurately and in a timely manner is crucial to making it easy to vote but hard to cheat. Reasonable exceptions should be made for limited groups such as military service members who are overseas, but otherwise, people should be required to meet the same deadline when returning their ballots.

Despite overwhelming popular support for election integrity measures, including returning ballots by Election Day, the Biden Administration has voiced support for policies that would move in the opposite direction. For example, progressives in Congress

proposed the For the People Act, which would extend the deadline to receive ballots until two weeks after Election Day.

During the last presidential election, mail-in ballots were a driving force for the large numbers of ballots that were being tallied overnight after Election Day. The United States Postal Service already faces challenges in delivering regular, everyday mail on time, and this issue is exacerbated by the newly increased access to mail-in ballots. The verification of mail-in ballots should occur before Election Day so that states have time to verify the validity of mail-in ballots and avoid delays on Election Day. The hard deadline of all ballots received by Election Day enables both early verification of mail-in ballot validity and transparent and timely counting of all ballots.

### THE FACTS

- ★ 43% of voters submitted ballots by mail in the 2020 general elections.
- ★ Just over 23% of voters submitted ballots by mail in the 2016 general elections.
- ★ Voter confidence in the accuracy of the presidential election fell to 59% from 2018 to 2020, a decrease of 11%.
- ★ 18 states and the District of Columbia currently allow ballots to be counted after Election Day.
- ★ The highest grace period for returning ballots is 10 days.
- ★ 32 states require ballots to be received by Election Day.

### THE AMERICA FIRST AGENDA

At the state level, support policies that:

- ★ Require all ballots returned to elections officials by

the end of Election Day. No absentee ballots should be accepted once the polls close.

- ★ Eliminate drop boxes for mail-in ballots, as this creates confusion about where and when a voter should submit his or her ballot.
- ★ Require an affidavit for absentee applications that affirms the voter is incapable of voting on Election Day and affirms eligibility under defined state law.
  - All absentee ballots should have clearly defined regulations, and all absentee voters should know the deadline for returning their ballots.
- ★ Require witness signatures for absentee ballots for more efficient ballot validation.
- ★ Require jurisdictions to begin processing (not counting) absentee ballots seven days before Election Day to ensure more timely election results.
- ★ Create a uniform statewide process to cure ballots, and limit the cure period.

## REFERENCES

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