



The Virus and the Vote:

COVID-19 and the 2020 Election

Nate Persily

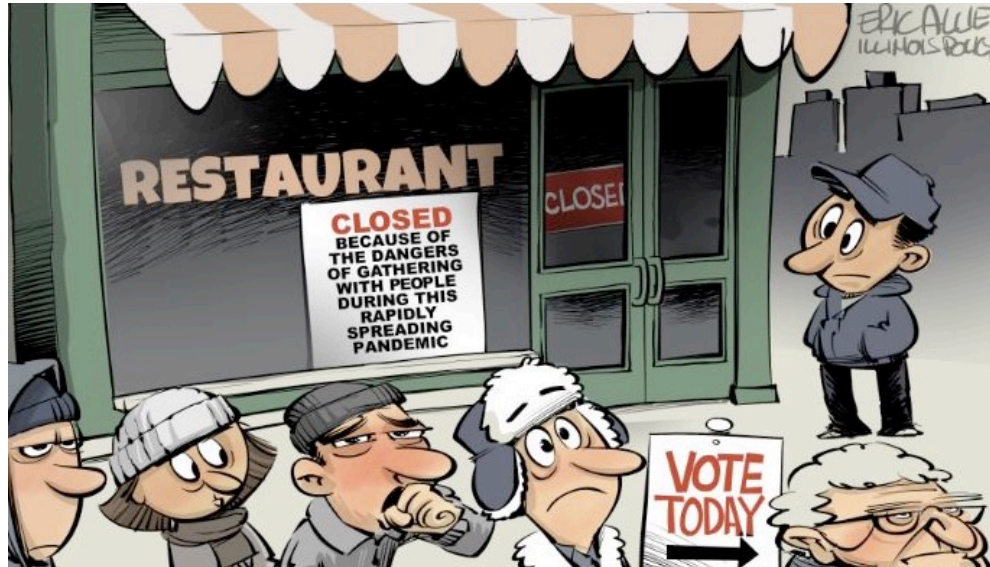
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@persily



The Problem

What steps should states and localities take now for the likelihood that sizeable shares of the population might not be able to vote safely in 2020 in the same way as recent elections?



The Solutions

- Move to vote by mail where possible.
 - Retrofit as many polling places as possible to avoid risk to voters and poll workers.
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- *Not so easy.*
 - *Continuum, not choice.*
 - *Almost all jurisdictions will and should have some mix of the two.*

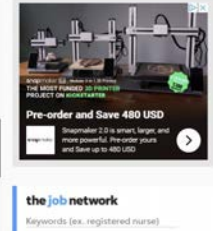
The Constraints

- Time & Money
- People, Places, and Things
- Structural Impediments
 - Decentralization
 - Contracting/procurement process
 - Ill-fitted law/regulations
- Politics/Polarization/Partisanship
- Unpredictability

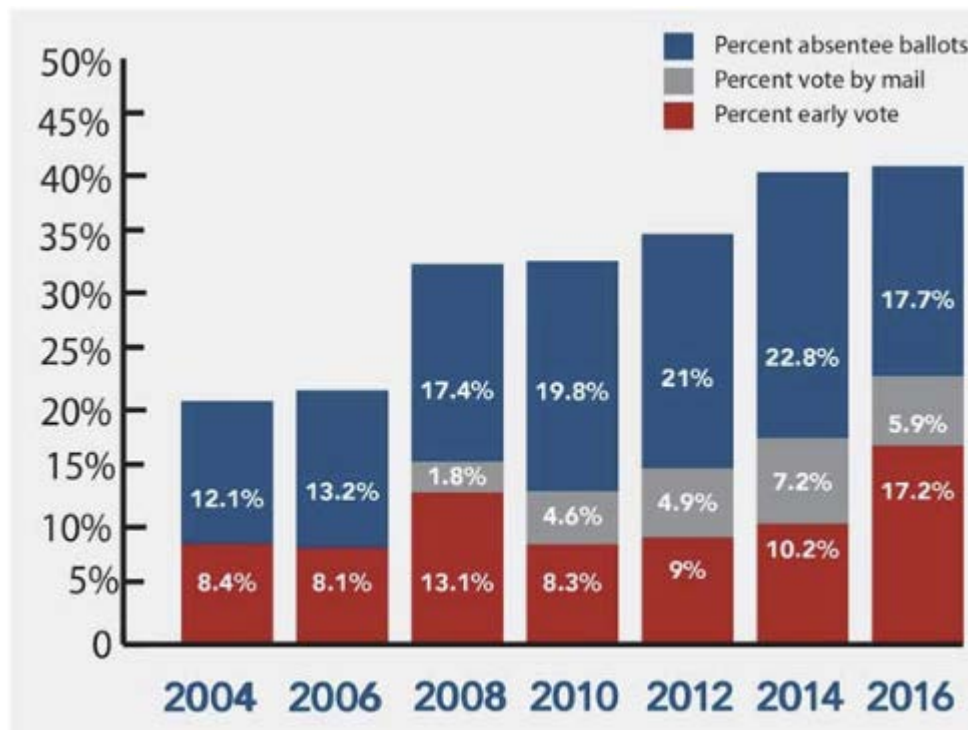


Lack of poll workers across Wisconsin, flood of absentee ballots spark fears votes will go uncounted

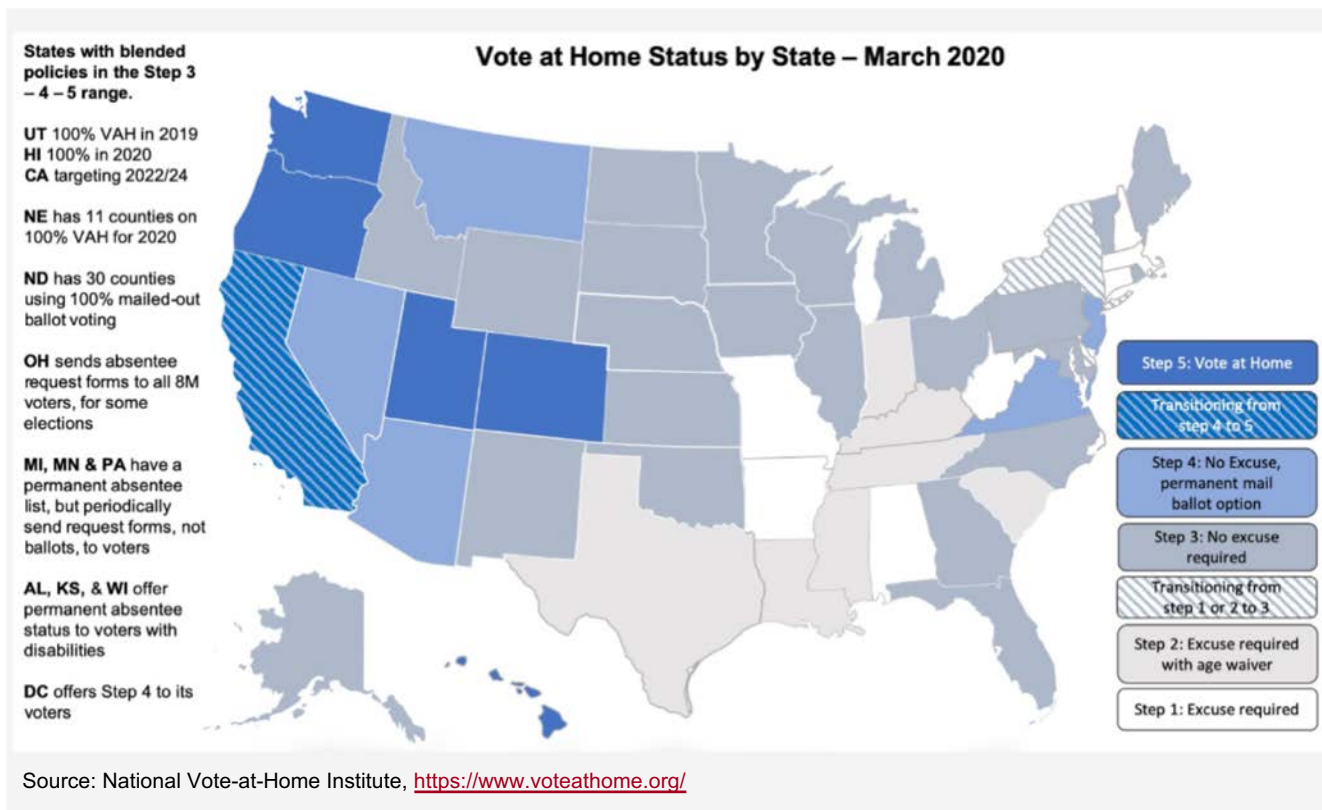
Patrick Marley and Molly Beck, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Published 9:21 a.m. CT March 31, 2020 | Updated 5:32 p.m. CT March 31, 2020



Trends in the Way Americans Vote



The Vote By Mail Landscape



Preparing for an Election Under Pandemic Conditions

STATE	NUMBER OF REGISTERED VOTERS (2018)	MAIL BALLOTS RETURNED AS PERCENT OF TURNOUT (2018)	ALL VOTERS CAN VOTE ABSENTEE WITHOUT AN EXCUSE	ONLINE ABSENTEE BALLOT REQUEST AVAILABLE STATEWIDE***	VOTE CENTERS ON ELECTION DAY (IN AT LEAST SOME COUNTIES)	IN-PERSON EARLY OR ABSENTEE VOTING	ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION	SAME DAY REGISTRATION
OR	2,748,232	100%	Vote by Mail*	Vote by Mail*	✓	✓	✓	X
WA	4,841,431	98%	Vote by Mail*	Vote by Mail*		✓	✓	✓
CO	3,953,613	95%	Vote by Mail*	Vote by Mail*	✓	✓	✓	✓
UT	1,658,457	90%	Vote by Mail*	Vote by Mail*	✓	✓	✓	✓
AZ	4,276,891	79%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
MT	706,173	73%	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓
CA	25,167,218	66%	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
NM	1,261,639	63%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Not Implemented
HI	756,751	56%	Vote by Mail*	Vote by Mail*	✓	✓	✓	✓
IN	4,500,196	33%	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X
FL	14,126,722	31%	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X
WY	283,941	30%	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓
ND	N/A**	29%	✓	✓	✓	Some Counties	n/a**	n/a**
ME	1,057,967	29%	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓
SD	594,453	26%	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X
MI	7,471,088	25%	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓
MN	3,422,515	25%	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓
IA	2,193,813	24%	✓	X	Local & Special Elections	✓	✓	✓
NE	1,219,276	24%	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X
OH	8,070,917	21%	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X
KS	1,835,473	16%	✓	X	Not Implemented	✓	✓	X

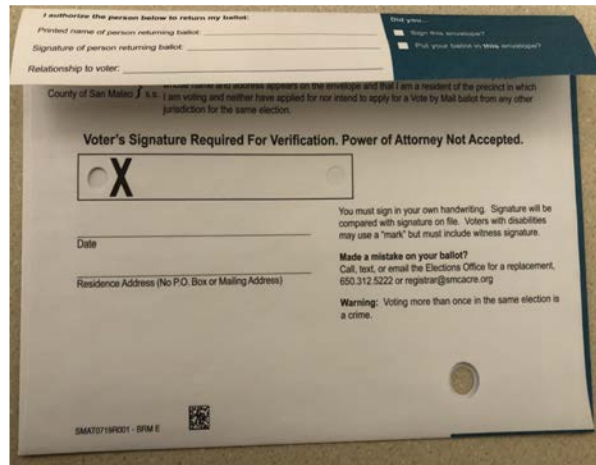
NJ	5,869,078	13%	✓	X	X	✓	Not Implemented	X
ID	917,609	12%	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
VT	489,385	10%	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
NV	1,773,566	9%	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
IL	8,751,060	9%	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓
AK	624,467	9%	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X
MO	4,127,333	9%	X	X	X	X	✓	X
NH	988,148	8%	X	X	X	X	X	✓
RI	781,478	7%	✓	X	X	X	✓	X
MS	2,079,732	7%	X	X	X	X	X	X
CT	2,369,335	6%	X	X	X	X	✓	✓
TX	15,615,925	6%	X	X	✓	✓	X	X
GA	6,944,851	6%	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X
OK	2,120,843	6%	✓	✓	X	✓	Not Implemented	X
WI	3,442,004	6%	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
MD	3,954,027	5%	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
SC	3,538,580	4%	X	X	X	✓	✓	X
DC	617,046	4%	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
NY	12,695,763	4%	X	X	X	✓	✓	X
DE	695,014	4%	X	✓	X	X	✓	X
PA	8,607,748	4%	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X
AL	3,465,352	3%	X	X	X	X	✓	X
MA	4,574,967	3%	X	X	X	✓	✓	X
LA	2,992,170	3%	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X
VA	5,666,627	3%	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X
NC	7,095,209	3%	✓	X	X	✓	✓	Early Voting Only
AR	1,786,840	2%	X	X	✓	✓	X	X
TN	4,163,359	2%	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X
WV	1,245,827	2%	X	X	X	✓	✓	X
KY	3,402,905	2%	X	X	X	✓	✓	X

Source: Brennan Center

Stanford University

Challenges with Vote By Mail

- Fraud and Perception of Fraud
- Disenfranchisement and Bias
 - Bias in absentee participation
 - Who votes absentee?
 - Who needs/wants a polling place?
 - Voters reluctant to change
 - Distrust of Mail
 - Voters with Disabilities
 - Same Day Registrants
 - Failsafe
 - Lost votes – Late, challenged, errors



Challenges to Creating Safe Polling Places

- People
- Places
- Things

Older people account for large shares of poll workers and voters in U.S. general elections

BY MICHAEL BARTHEL AND GALEN STOCKING



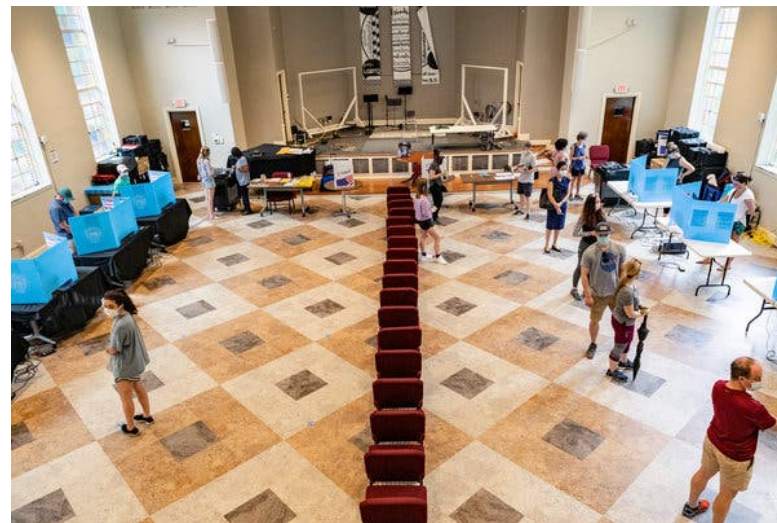
Adelia Hurtak wipes down a polling place during the Florida presidential primary in Miami in March. (Joe Raedle/Getty Images)

National Guard has delivered PPE to Iowa poll workers

by KTVB News Desk | Tuesday, May 19th 2020



Gov. Kim Reynolds' Secretary of State Paul Pate, governor with Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management and the Iowa National Guard to deliver masks, gloves and hand sanitizer for use at polling places on June 2. Photo provided



What is to be done?



- **Education/Outreach**
 - Voter education
 - Pollworker Recruitment
- **Temporal and Physical Spacing**
- **Reimagine polling places**
 - Socially distant voting – curbside, arena, “Take a number”
 - Sterilization/Disinfectant/PPE
- **All hands on deck!**
 - Corporate role
 - Intergovernmental coordination (esp. USPS)



South Korea

Voting with Coronavirus

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, South Korea is proceeding with its national election on April 15. Confirmed patients vote by mail, while those in self-quarantine can do so after the general polls close.

People with coronavirus can vote by mail.

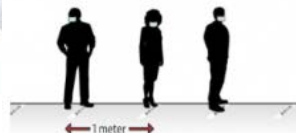
People without symptoms and family members of confirmed sick people are allowed to leave quarantine to vote.



1 Workers spray a disinfectant in the polling station.



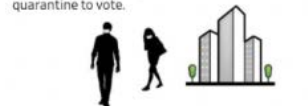
2 Voters must stand at tape-marked spots spaced 1-meter apart.



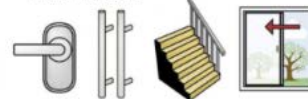
3 Voters are first given hand sanitizer, then gloves.



4 Voters take the ballot to the voting booth, make their selections, and drop the ballot in a box.



5 Door handles and handrails are cleaned and windows opened.



6 When voters arrive, their temperature is checked.



7 Voters submit an ID to the poll worker and then pull down their mask to verify their identity and then sign. Normally, verification is done with a fingerprint. A ballot is printed.



8 Voters discard their gloves as they leave.



Ballot boxes are disinfected for cleaning.
Chung Jung Sun (Globe Images)



Temperature check at entrance.
Chung Jung Sun (Globe Images)



Source: South Korean government

The Most Important Resource: Time

- More time to vote
- More time to administer election
- More time to count votes
- More time to announce results...



Delayed results



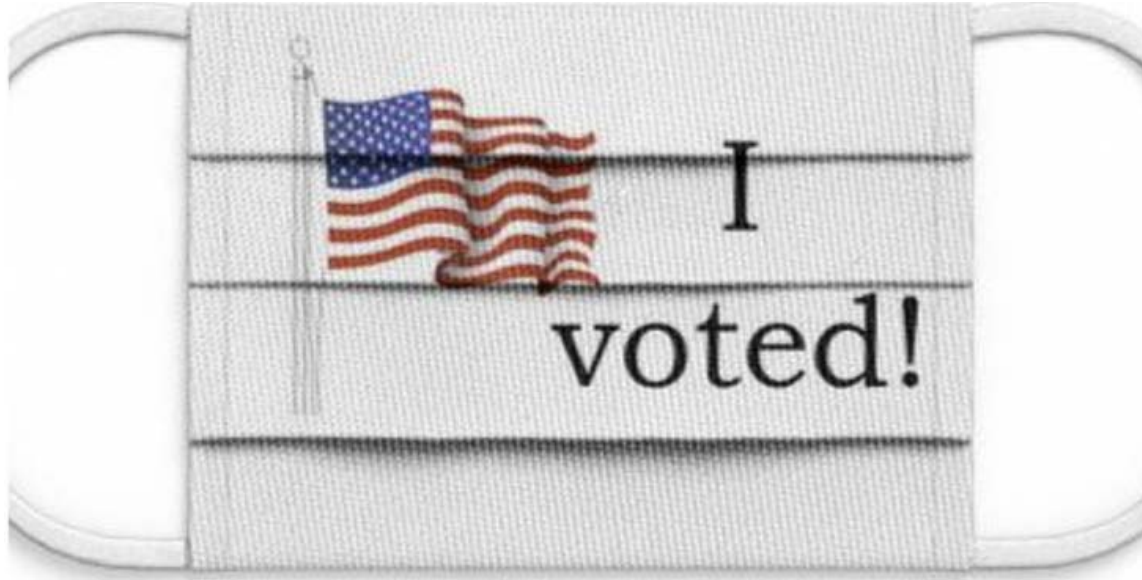
An election worker sorts voter mail for the presidential primary in Washington state in March. (Jason Pedersen) AP/Getty Images



Judge signals he will expand voting but not delay Wisconsin's election amid coronavirus outbreak

Stanford-MIT Healthy Elections Project

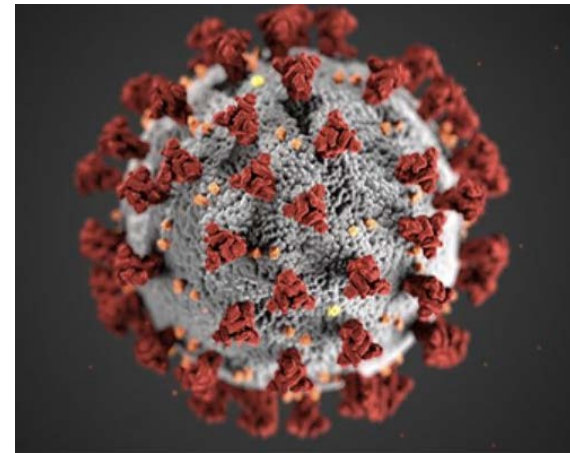
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COVID-19 and the 2020 Election



PREPARING TO VOTE
IN THE MIDST OF A PANDEMIC

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