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Using Colorado's Mail-voting System as Model Would Save Country from Disaster this November

By *Robert Weiner and Wesam Farah*

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President Donald Trump has been melting down in response to states moving to enact a vote-by-mail system. This follows his July 30th tantrum, during which Trump triple-downed on his efforts to discredit the upcoming presidential election by declaring on Twitter that it will be the "most fraudulent election in history" and stressing that the election must be postponed until citizens can "safely vote."

Odd, it seems that mail voting must have slipped our president's mind--despite his cynical and nonconstructive lambasting of the system, he happens to be a mail voter himself, and has been urging his staff and supporters to do the same. Surely this couldn't be a hackneyed political ploy to manipulate and discredit an election? Alas, one is irrevocably drawn to the conclusion.

But perhaps there is a silver lining in Trump's renewed efforts to erode American democracy--the conversation has turned back to how absolutely vital a nationwide mail voting system will be to the health of our democracy this November and for the years to come.

As the election draws near, we absolutely cannot afford to ignore mail voting for any longer. How deep in Trump's lap are state officials like Maryland's Governor Hogan who refuse to fully embrace voting by mail? There still remains a colossal amount of uncertainty regarding how to vote by mail in various states, especially among younger or less politically involved voters. This affects not just the presidential election, but the Senate races, such as Colorado's hotly contested bout between Hickenlooper and Gardner. Even House Oversight Chairman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) expects mail voting to occur widely, "it will be there when it's needed."

Alison Adler, the administrative coordinator for the Democratic Party's Young Democratic voter-registration drive at Watergate HQ in 1971-72 said in regards to the confusion surrounding mail voting: "while it may seem like a 'no-brainer' it is anything but. [People] need clear instructions as to how to go about this, otherwise, they go blank."

An absentee voter herself, Adler suggests that "states need to get the message out loud and clear with easy to understand instructions." Adler is correct, states need to be taking proactive measures to expand and solidify their absentee ballot system while dispelling myths, fears, and uncertainty regarding the process of mail voting. In fact,

they should look to states such as Colorado which have developed a superb mail ballot system.

Colorado has proven that voting by mail not only increases accessibility (has the third highest turnout in the country) and efficiency (costs decreased by 40% since the switch to universal mail-in voting). Not to mention that in Colorado, those who wish to do so may still vote in person, as long as they present a valid state-issued ID. The best of both worlds.

House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn (D-SC) has expressed admiration for Colorado's system, stating "I love the Colorado method!" when asked

But then there lies the oft-cited concern of security. Luckily, Colorado appoints election watchers to observe teams of non-partisan judges, who are tasked with verifying each voter signature on the back of the ballot envelope before moving on to the next. Those signatures are checked against those in their voter registration. If the signatures don't match, the vote is set aside for investigation.

Moreover, mail voting leaves a paper trail, and ballots are saved two years after the election in order to cross reference for newer ballots, or in case security issues or concerns should arise. They also take the extra mile with a ballot tracking system so voters can see where, and to whom their ballot is sent.

Contrary to what Trump would have one think, voting by mail enjoys far reaching bipartisan support--according to a Reuters survey most Americans (and most Republicans) would prefer mail in ballots in order to safely vote during Covid.

Thus the time is of the essence, the sooner states adopt a mail-in ballot system like that of Colorado and espouse its security and efficiency through widespread media channels, the better chance we have of a safe and fair election. If states truly wish to hold free and fair elections, they must advertise to and inform the public about their mail-voting systems through television, online video ads, internet ads, street corner ads, and through interacting with local communities.

Time is of the essence. We need to act now.

Robert Weiner is a former spokesman for the Clinton White House, the House Government Operations and Oversight Committee, and was senior staff for Congressman John Conyers, Charles Rangel, Claude Pepper, Ed Koch, Sen. Edward Kennedy; and 4-Star Gen. Barry McCaffrey. He was youth vote coordinator for the Democratic National Committee/Young Democrats in 1971-1972 when 18 year-olds first obtained the right to vote, and testified at congressional hearings on mail-in registration in 1972.

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