

Substantial Disruption



The Eternal Nonsense of the Baseless Claim (of Voter Fraud)

By Mike Tully

The late Congressman [Henry Hyde](#) once said this on the floor of the [House of Representatives](#): “There is a story that goes around in my hometown, Chicago. It says, Bury me when I die in Chicago because I want to stay active in politics after I am gone.” That joke, which dates back at least to political comedian [Mort Sahl](#), has been [applied to other jurisdictions](#) as well, including Arizona. It’s a funny line and has the ring of truth, given [Chicago’s history](#) of creative political shenanigans. But it’s only a joke.

Or is it? In recent years many Republicans and conservatives have tried to weaponize what should only be a funny line in a malicious attempt to strip away the voting rights of people they fear will support their political rivals. The political right has been flogging the baseless “voter fraud” meme for so long that I usually disregard it as white noise unworthy of a response. But since the most recent example of this lie appeared in the [Southern Arizona News Examiner](#), where this column runs, I owe it to readers to set the record straight.

That article, which originally ran in the [Heritage Foundation’s](#) propaganda sheet, [The Daily Signal](#), contains 899 words and zero substance. The author, Washington lawyer Joanne Young, endorsed President Donald Trump’s demand for an investigation into alleged “vote fraud.” She noted Trump’s complaint that some voters are registered in more than one state and some of the names on voter registration rolls are of dead people. This is the same President who [declared](#) that “nobody knew that health care could be so complicated.” God knows what he’ll do if someone spills the beans about Santa.

Ms. Young stated her opposition to mandatory voter registration, all mail-in voting, same-day registration and no-excuse absentee voting, and her support for voter identification requirements. She decried opponents of voter ID laws, usually political progressives. She alleged that Hillary Clinton blamed her defeat to Senator Bernie Sanders in the New Hampshire primary on voter fraud. She failed to support any of her allegations with a single citation or reference to any source materials.

That, of course, gives her something in common with the President, who makes preposterous claims with no basis, such as his [assertion](#) that millions of people voted in more than one jurisdiction. “You have people registered in two states,” he told ABC News. “They vote twice. There are millions of votes, in my opinion.” “Now,” he added, “I’m gonna do an investigation.” He won’t have far to look, since his chief advisor, press secretary, labor secretary, son-in-law, and daughter are all [registered in more than one state](#). And the expert he relied upon for his allegation of millions of illegal votes being cast can draw on his own experience: he’s [concurrently registered](#) in at least three states.

As the Pew Center on the States found in a [comprehensive 2012 study](#), many people, like Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner, are registered in more than one state. And voter registration rolls contain the names of many voters who have passed away. Apparently, dead people neglect to notify County Recorders that they are dead. Prevaricators like Ms. Young and the President who point to the Pew study as evidence of voter fraud are misrepresenting the facts. The Pew study does not reach that conclusion and does not recommend voter ID laws as a remedy. The Brennan Center for Justice recently published a thorough compilation of research into vote fraud and concluded that “[it very rarely happens](#).” A 2014 [study by the Washington Post](#), cited in the Brennan Center report, identified 31 credible incidents of in-person voting fraud out of *one billion* ballots.

Ms. Young did not provide a citation for her claim that Hillary Clinton blamed voter fraud for her New Hampshire primary loss to Senator Sanders. I spent an hour researching the Internet for support for that claim without success. Ms. Clinton’s [concession speech](#) did not mention vote fraud and there were [other reasons for her loss](#) to Senator Sanders, who trounced her. And, incidentally, [New Hampshire requires voter ID](#).

The reason many of us oppose voter ID laws is not because we favor vote fraud. Identification laws do not improve the voting process; they hurt it by [suppressing the vote of minorities](#). That is why Ms. Young and others use unsupported allegations to fabricate data in favor of ID laws. They couldn’t care less about the integrity of the vote. Their aim is to strip away the right to vote from those they fear would support their political opponents. That’s the danger, not fictitious voter fraud.