

P. O. Box 512  
Montpelier, Vermont 05601  
January 28, 2021

Senate Committee on Government Operations  
meeting remotely

Subject: Elections Issues

Dear Committee:

Thank you for inviting me to attend this afternoon's hearing. I am sending this letter instead.

Here are comments on some issues of concern or of support.

Eliminate the requirements for an in-person polling place

I strongly oppose this. I insist on being able to place my ballot into the ballot box or vote tabulator myself. I would always have a lingering doubt as to whether my vote were actually received and counted if I did not do that myself. Reviewing the checklist later would be insufficient if I found out that my name had not been checked.

Use postmark date instead of received date.

My current thinking is that ballots should be received before the close of balloting on election day. I've heard and acknowledge the arguments on using postmarks.

I suggest getting information from local elections officials on the legibility of postmarks. I receive letters with no apparent postmark date. Even if the envelope has a postmark, my recollection is that not all are legible.

And there would need to be a provision for handling ballots without a postmark. (Dropped off at the clerk's office; illegible.)

Allow early processing.

I suggest determining from the clerks if 30 days is too long.

Security of the machines and ballots. The vaults are open to the public for access to land records and minutes of city council meetings. Were the security processes in place in the general election sufficient to prevent tampering or fraud by someone entering the vault? Or was it basically a trust by neglect?

More frequent and easier purges

I consider "purge" in this context to be a dirty word. To me, it means restricting the ability of legitimate people from registering and voting. As you are all aware, restriction is in the opposite direction of Vermont's policy of making it easier to register and vote. I hope this is an unfortunate use of the word "purge", rather than an intent to purge in its negative aspects.

I have two experiences with purges. I lived a couple years in Chicago. Illinois required then registering by party. Having come from Vermont back then, I registered as a Republican. One part of the context is that primary elections in Chicago were held the Tuesday after St. Patrick's Day. The Democratic party used the St. Patrick's Day parade on State Street as a blatantly political event. Many of the groups in the parade were the Democratic candidates and 20, 30, 40 supporters from each ward or precinct or whatever they were called. Chicago also had a system where people could visit residences to confirm that the person actually lived there. Of course those visits occurred during the work day. I believed then and still believe, that I was visited before each election (and there were at least three, maybe five, when I lived there) because I had registered as a Republican. So I'd come home and find a form that my name would be removed from the voter roles unless I

confirmed I lived there. Fortunately I worked a few blocks from city hall and I had a bit of flexibility in the timing of my lunch break. So I could re-register during my lunch break. I doubt that everyone had that opportunity to re-register.

My second experience with purges was five or 10 years ago here in Montpelier, having lived and voted many years here. I went to vote and my name was not on the checklist. Fortunately John Odum recognizes me. We went to the checklist table and he authorized those there to write my name in and to give me a ballot. As I understand it, a clerk somewhere had confused me with someone newly registering there; and removed my name from Montpelier's checklist. I acknowledge that provisional ballots are an option in this type of case. However, some more careful process or checks would be a less inhibiting experience than walking into the polling place and finding one had been removed.

So please be careful with use of the word "purge" and be careful of the process used.

#### Allow for the curing of ballots.

I support this concept.

I know someone who served as an observer for the Democratic party in November. This was in a heavily Republican County in gerrymandered Pennsylvania. Anyway, Pennsylvania allows correction of ballots. This observer reported to me that in that county, there was a court order prohibiting the correcting of defective ballots. The observer kept getting calls from Pennsylvania Democratic headquarters about getting ballots corrected. The observer finally got one of the elections officials to explain to HQ why there were no corrected ballots and stopped getting calls. I do not know the details of the court case and resulting order. It might be worth checking out why that happened.

#### Require signature verification

Poor idea. Over the years I have used different forms of signatures: Full middle name; middle initial only; no middle initial. Full first name; nickname. I have no idea which I used to register to vote. So if I used a different form, my ballot would be rejected, right?

#### Prohibit corporate contributions

I support this idea.

#### Requirement to be a candidate

Brought about by the election of Molly Gray? I oppose this. I think that the decision should be left to the voters. Not having voted before was a factor in my decision for the office of lieutenant governor.

#### Rank choice voting

I've used rank choice voting in other contexts. I did not find the concept or implementation difficult. It seems every session there is a bill requiring a civics class in order to be graduated from high school. If we go to rank choice voting, maybe it is time to consider such a class.

#### Faithless elector

Doesn't Vermont require electors to vote for the candidate who was elected by the voters? I think that is how it should be.

When I see a bill, I might have comments on some of the other issues I've not mentioned in this letter.

Thank you for reading this letter.

Sincerely,  
Thomas Weiss