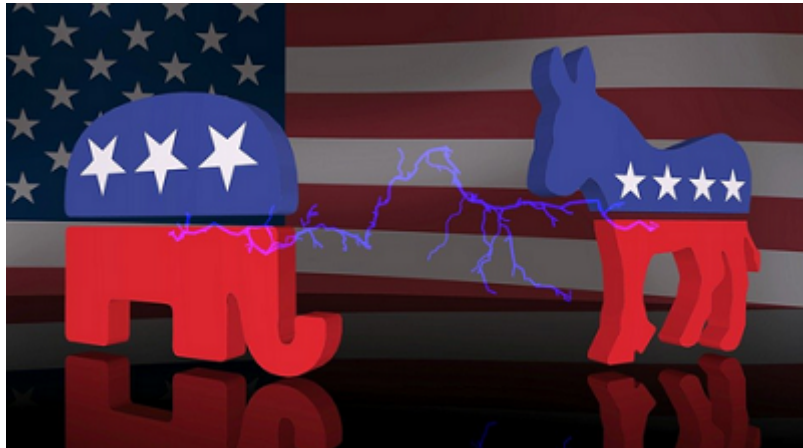


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Centralized voting system



Presidential election chaos has been a hot topic. People are credibly asserting that election chaos may be unnecessary and perhaps avoidable altogether with the proper reform. What type of reform? Lets start with a comparison between the US and it's northern neighbor:



Among the more advanced nations, The U.S. has a unique system. It is unique in the respect that each of the 50 states hold their own election. These state elections have their own rules and their own counting methods.

During the most recent election, the election results trickled in over a period of days. As election results were updated, some suggest it may have been these varying rules among the states that created election result fluctuations that gave the appearance that one of the candidates was leading the race in several states. Preliminary results excluded uncounted votes for the other candidate. Delays counting ballots sent through the postal service and results from large cities created confusion and controversy. This decentralized, election system appears to have its share of flaws. How could it be reformed before the next election?

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Perhaps by centralizing the election system. In Canada, elections are conducted by a single non-partisan federal agency. The rules and counting methods for all of Canada's provinces are the same. This centralized system counts all the votes. Once all of the votes are counted, the winner of the election is announced.

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Another issue with the election system is low voter turnout. For some reason, not all registered voters are casting ballots. Reasons range from issues with hours at the polling stations, long lines and in certain cases a decline in confidence. Making it simpler to vote should offer an easy fix. What federal agency has the capability of improving voter participation?



The IRS. This federal already requires reporting of income and healthcare information. Why not add voting information? As we all know, every taxpayer completes and attaches an income form and a healthcare form to their federal tax returns. Why not have the IRS create a VOTE form, require all taxpayers to complete this form and include this form with their individual federal and state tax returns, every tax year.

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The form would ask the taxpayer simple questions. The first could be whether or not they are an eligible, registered voter.

If NO, the taxpayer would be asked to skip the rest of the questions, sign the the form and submit it with their tax returns. These taxpayers, the ones unable to vote, can be carefully studied and used to determine among the general population the percentage of ineligible voters and reasons these people were deemed ineligible to vote; age, criminal record, etc.. Likely, this may be valuable information for people tasked to assess the state of the voting system and ways to improve it.

If YES, the taxpayer's would be required to identify the political party of choice for any upcoming presidential elections during the tax year. VOTE forms submitted to the IRS would be a more efficient method when compared to mail-in ballots, as taxpayers are required to file tax returns. Why not utilize this opportunity to ensure voter participation in the process? Imagine the cost efficiency such a system would achieve compared to the costly and decentralized one currently in place.

The IRS may share the VOTE forms with a centralized U.S. voting agency. Notably, VOTE forms would obviate the need for individual State elections, mail in ballots, voting machines and enourmous costs associated with counting all the votes. Though there is one problem with the above: What to do with all the money saved from implementing the efficient system.

Taxpayers won't have to wait until November to declare their party affiliations. VOTE forms allow them do so at tax time. Once a taxpayer's party affiliation is declared, the political parties would have time to nominate a candidate for that party. Additionally, the new centralized federal voting agency would have months to receive and evaluate the IRS VOTE forms.

The IRS form could be created and used for presidential elections, federal elections, state elections and local elections. Since everyone files taxes, IRS VOTE forms may improve rates of voter participation during the next presidential election. These ideas should improve election efficiency, increase voter participation, and save money for the federal government.

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