Can American Democracy Survive the 2020 Elections?

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ELECTION MELTDOWN

Dirty Tricks, Distrust, and the Threat to American Democracy
Republican should fight very hard when it comes to state wide mail-in voting. Democrats are clamoring for it. Tremendous potential for voter fraud, and for whatever reason, doesn't work out well for Republicans. @foxandfriends

5:20 AM - 8 Apr 2020

41,752 Retweets 145,640 Likes
Stacey Abrams, fresh off her meeting with Joe Biden earlier today in DC, said someone outside asked if she’s ever going to concede the Georgia gubernatorial election.

“I said, ‘no.’”

On a presidential run, Abrams says she feels she has to consider it b/c people like her aren’t frequently mentioned, & tshe has much to offer.

Then, discussing her credentials, she added a possible Beto reference: “I did win my election, I just didn’t get to have the job.”
VOTER FRAUD ALERT: The @TXsecofstate discovered approx 95,000 individuals identified by DPS as non-U.S. citizens have a matching voter registration record in TX, approx 58,000 of whom have voted in TX elections. Any illegal vote deprives Americans of their voice.
Four Reasons for Americans’ Increasing Mistrust in Fairness and Accuracy of Our Election System

1. Voter suppression

*Fish v. Kobach* case
Q. Just hypothetically, Dr. Richman, if you came across the name Carlos Murguia, would you code that as foreign or non-foreign?

A. I'm sorry, could you, please, spell the name.

Q. Sure. Carlos, C-a-r-o-s, M-r-g-u-i-a, M-u-r-g-u-i-a.

A. Probably.

Q. Probably what?

A. Probably would code it as foreign.

Q. Okay. Are you aware that Carlos Murguia is a United States District Court Judge who sits in this courthouse?

A. I am not.
What does the social science tell us about voter suppression efforts?

Should that matter?
2. Election Administrator
Incompetence/Weakest Link

2018 Florida election recount

“An election like the one we just finished almost always has so many moving parts and so many components. . . . I’m pleased that we were able to accomplish what we did accomplish in the period of time that was available.” – Brenda Snipes, Broward County Supervisor of Elections
“If you look at Broward County, they have had a horrible history... And if you look at the person, in this case a woman, involved, she has had a horrible history...And Rick Scott who won by, it was close but he won by a comfortable margin, every couple hours it goes down a little bit. And then you see the people, and they were involved with the fraud of the fake dossier, the phony dossier, and I guess I hear they were somehow involved or worked with the GPS Fusion people, who have committed, I mean you look at what they’ve done, you look at the dishonesty, look, look, there’s bad things gone on in Broward County, really bad things.”
SOS RELEASES MORE DETAILS OVER FAILED CYBERATTACK, OFFICIALLY REQUESTS FBI TO INVESTIGATE
Posted: Sunday, November 04th 2018 In: General

ATLANTA – The Secretary of State’s Office issues the following update: “We opened an investigation into the Democratic Party of Georgia after receiving information from our legal team about failed efforts to breach the online voter registration system and My Voter Page. We are working with our private sector vendors and investigators to … [Read More]

AFTER FAILED HACKING ATTEMPT, SOS LAUNCHES INVESTIGATION INTO GEORGIA DEMOCRATIC PARTY
Posted: Sunday, November 04th 2018 In: General

ATLANTA – After a failed attempt to hack the state’s voter registration system, the Secretary of State’s office opened an investigation into the Democratic Party of Georgia on the evening of Saturday, November 3, 2018. Federal partners, including the Department of Homeland Security and Federal Bureau of Investigation, were immediately alerted. “While we cannot … [Read More]
3. Dirty Tricks

Executive Summary

In September - December 2017, we ran a digital messaging operation to influence the outcome of the AL senate race. In August, 2017, we developed a strategy of micro-targeting specific AL districts to radicalize Democrats, suppress unpersuadable Republicans (“hard Rs”), and faction moderate Republicans by advocating for write-in candidates. Our goal was to move 50,000 votes.

We targeted 650,000 likely AL voters, with a combination of persona accounts, astroturfing, automated social media amplification and targeted advertising. Using these tools, we ran an aggressive campaign that contributed historically high turnout in the specific Democratic districts we targeted a 5% drop in voter turnout compared to the 2014 congressional race in hard R districts, and drove write-in votes to a number of candidates. We asked one of our conservative Facebook pages to end 22,879 write-in votes, which, combined with a 30% drop in hard R turnout, moved enough votes in a Doug Jones victory.

Highlights:
- We performed rapid, repetitive, and sustained targeting of a select group of 650k likely AL voters on Facebook, resulting in 6.17m impressions to Alabamians over the course of the campaign (not counting additional organic reach of an estimated +5m).
- We targeted Democratic counties across AL with aggressive anti-Moore memes, and focused on Jones’ history prosecuting the KKK. This supported national GOTV efforts that drove historically high black voter turnout.
- We targeted AL suburban, college-educated Republican women to persuade them not to vote with their husbands. According to Washington Post exit polling, “Jones made particularly large gains among white women”, and “Most women and independents thought allegations against Moore are true.”
- We established the Facebook page, which was authentic enough to voters that a write-in candidate reached out and asked for our endorsement.
- We then strategically split the Republican vote by establishing a relationship with, and then supporting, that conservative write-in candidate.
- We aggressively targeted evangelical hard Rs with messaging meant to provoke defection and depress turnout. According to NY Times poll analysis, turnout in hard R districts dropped 5% from AL congressional elections in 2016, and 45% from the 2016 presidential elections.
Democrats Faked Online Push to Outlaw Alcohol in Alabama Race

A Dry Alabama Facebook ad, captured in a screenshot by Elizabeth BeShears, a Republican communications consultant.
Other Dirty Tricks

Russian social media campaign, targeting African Americans in particular

It is evident that the campaigns sought to demobilize African Americans, LGBT, and liberal voters. This was attempted through organic posts that attacked Hillary Clinton. Content referred to President Clinton’s 2016 signing into law of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) as an attack on the gay community, and in another, argued that Hillary supports Muslims, who the post insinuates are anti-gay. Attacks on Clinton and calls for voter disengagement were particularly clear in Blacktivist during September, October, and November 2016, with statements such as “NO LIVES MATTER TO HILLARY CLINTON. ONLY VOTES MATTER TO HILLARY CLINTON” (Blacktivist, 29 October 2016), another one argues that black people should vote for Jill Stein (Blacktivist, 7 October 2016), or not vote at all, with the claim: “NOT VOTING is a way to exercise our rights” (Blacktivist, 3 November 2016).
DIRTY TRICKS

LIKE IF YOU AGREE

ONLY U.S. CITIZENS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO VOTE!

Example of Russian meme on alleged noncitizen voting, 2016 elections (Source: New Knowledge report; original source of photograph: Associated Press/Damian Dovarganes [2012]).
“I Don’t Vote” — But He Did. Here’s How Alleged Election Fraud Works In North Carolina.

“McCrae or whoever’s doing it, they checked them boxes,” Chris Eason exclusively told BuzzFeed News. State officials are now investigating the claim.
Future Dirty Tricks

- Hacking of emails
- Possible attacks on electrical grid; Ukraine and U.S. examples

America’s Electric Grid Has a Vulnerable Back Door—and Russia Walked Through It

A Wall Street Journal reconstruction of the worst known hack into the nation's power system reveals attacks on hundreds of small contractors
4. “Stolen” election rhetoric

Of course there is large scale voter fraud happening on and before election day. Why do Republican leaders deny what is going on? So naive!

5:33 AM - 17 Oct 2016

12,684 Retweets 31,545 Likes
STACEY ABRAMS: "DEMOCRACY FAILED" GEORGIA IN GOV RACE
4. “Stolen” election rhetoric

Why Democrats Should Not Call the Georgia Governor’s Race “Stolen”

There are three important reasons to cool this rhetoric, despite Brian Kemp’s odious voter suppression efforts.

By RICHARD L. HASEN

NOV 18, 2018 • 6:57 PM
HABFoundation 🔄 @ABFalecbaldwin · 18 Nov 2018

Wherein @rickhasen lays out his “guns don’t kill people” pablum re “voter suppression doesn’t effect elections. The lack of votes for your candidate does.”

This...is...ridiculous.

And, no, don’t stop saying Kemp is illegitimate.

**Why Democrats Should Not Call the Georgia Gover...**

There are three important reasons to cool this rhetoric, despite Brian Kemp’s odious voter suppression efforts.

apple.news
Election Meltdown in 2020?

What if:
Trump at first appears to win election, but as more votes are counted, Democrats take the lead in key swing states?

—or—

Trump wins but Democrats claim voter suppression in Georgia or Florida was responsible?

—or—

Hacked power outage in Detroit on Election Day leads to Trump victory in Michigan?
COVID-19 and the Election

--Mistrust of vote by mail
--Potential disenfranchisement of voters (Wisconsin example)
--Misinformation related to voting and virus (postponing voting for example)
Short term solutions

- Rely on the courts? (Problem is not just perceived partisan/ideological divide on the court but the absence of clear law)

- Rely on wise elders? (Who will listen to Colin Powell and Madeleine Albright?)

- Take to the streets?
Medium term solutions

- **On voter suppression:** litigation and public condemnation: push for idea that all eligible voters, and only eligible voters should be able to cast a ballot which will be fairly and accurately counted

- **On incompetence:** bipartisan push to eliminate pockets of incompetence; greater transparency; adequate resources

- **On dirty tricks:** potential legislation, consistent with First Amendment, to deal with misinformation; adequate law enforcement; no ballot harvesting; subsidies for local investigative media; pressure on social media companies

- **On rhetoric:** transparency; bipartisanship on election norms; work on other three issues to remove triggers
Long term solutions

Need societal long-term change

- Nonpartisan, professionalized election administration; stress on uniformity, transparency, and fairness
- Stress on enhanced voter competence in an era of misinformation
- Civics education about the importance of the rule of law and peaceful transitions to power. Losers must accept election results and agree to try to win next, fair election
Thank you!