Conservative Principles for Building Trust in Elections

Summary

CALLING ELECTION RESULTS "ILLEGITIMATE" OR "STOLEN" has become a normal feature of [prominent](#) [campaigns](#) and [undermines](#) our system of self-government. Recent polling has shown that [less than half](#) of Americans express substantial trust that votes in the 2024 presidential election will be counted accurately, with particular distrust among GOP voters—where less than a quarter have high confidence. To ensure that America remains a ["shining city upon a hill,"](#) conservatives must vigorously pursue a strategy to rebuild trust in our elections.

It begins with attesting to the legitimacy of the system itself and continues with recognizing opportunities to continuously improve the voting process. While mistrust in elections is increasing, Americans continue to have confidence in their [state and local governments](#) and in [local elections](#). This gives local Republican officials a [crucial platform](#) to improve confidence in elections nationwide.

The following principles are designed to help conservative leaders shore up confidence in American elections within their local communities:

THE PRINCIPLES

1. **Publicly affirm** the security and integrity of elections across the U.S. and avoid actively fueling doubt about elections in other jurisdictions.

2. **Use transparency and public outreach** to reassure voters of election integrity.

3. **Champion policy changes** that can help build trust in our elections system.

Principles

1 **Publicly affirm the security and integrity of elections across the U.S. and avoid actively fueling doubt in elections in other jurisdictions.**

Highlighting the election-security practices used commonly across the country increases voter trust in the process. These include:

- Testing every voting machine to ensure integrity;

- Conducting audits of ballots after every election to verify accuracy; and

- Storing paper ballots in locked facilities to confirm security.

Unfortunately, much of the public doesn't know these practices are in place, but informing them can make a big difference. Critically, this kind of information also helps build voters' confidence not only in their home states' elections but in other states' elections as well.

DO:

✔ **Affirm the common rules and practices in place across the U.S. to protect the security, integrity, and accessibility of our elections.**

–Example: "While election systems differ state-to-state, the basics are the same across the country, and common protections are in place everywhere to prevent fraud and ensure everyone's vote is counted fairly."

✔ **Be transparent about minor and inconsequential errors in the electoral system vs. intentional, widespread voter fraud.**

– Example: "No election system is perfect, given the sheer volume of ballots, and minor errors are bound to happen. But minor errors are not the same as intentional, widespread voter fraud, which is extremely rare."

DON'T:

✔ **Raise doubts about elections in other states or jurisdictions without substantial evidence.**

– Example: "I don't know about how they run their elections in their state, but here in our state we have secure elections."

2 **Use transparency and public outreach to reassure voters.**

Transparency and public education about the voting and vote-counting processes helps to build citizens' confidence in elections.

DO:

✔ **Increase public outreach and transparency activities by state and local election officials.**

✔ **Educate and deploy other trusted local leaders, such as police officers, veterans, senior citizens, local business owners, and faith leaders.**

3 **Champion policy changes that can help build trust in the spirit of "continuous improvement" of our elections system.**

Americans should feel confident that our elections are conducted with integrity, accuracy, and security. Even so, our elections benefit from a process of "continuous improvement."

The following list of policies and practices are already in place in many states, but the entire country would benefit from each state adopting them.

✔ **Preprocessing of absentee ballots**

Pre-processing of absentee ballots before Election Day can turn around faster results and avoid the frustration of slow results in tight elections. Pre-processing ballots also gives voters more time to address procedural issues with their ballots—also known as "ballot curing"—ensuring that all lawful votes are counted.

✔ **Ballot tracking**

States can also provide voters with confidence that their absentee ballots will be counted through the use of online tracking tools. While most states already provide this service, a statewide tracking tool in the remaining states could help reduce confusion and improve confidence among voters.

✔ **Voter ID**

Americans want to know that all lawful votes—and only lawful votes—are counted. Voter ID policies instill confidence among voters without reducing turnout. States should look to incorporate voter ID requirements for in-person and absentee ballots, along with low- or no-cost state ID options, to bolster confidence in elections.

✔ Pre-certification audits

While many Americans may believe an election is over once races are called by the media, the truth is that the election process continues until the results are certified. To improve public confidence that ballots were counted accurately, states should look to conduct audits of the results before those results are certified.

✔ Paper ballots

Paper ballots are vital to building trust in elections, which is why states have increasingly adopted them in recent years. Creating a paper trail for every vote cast in America ensures that robust audits are available across the country and helps promote trust in elections.