

The background of the slide is a blurred image of several flags flying in front of the Statue of Liberty. The flags include the United States flag, the Maryland state flag, the New Mexico state flag, and the Georgia state flag.

WEBINAR
FORTIFYING ELECTIONS AGAINST ABUSE OF POWER
Bipartisan Wins and Promising Progress

April 29, 2026

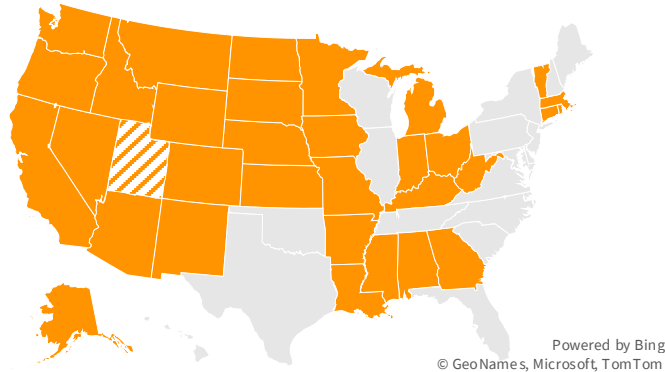
NATIONWIDE PROBLEM

Partisan allegiance dominates election governance

33 states

partisan-elected chief election officer

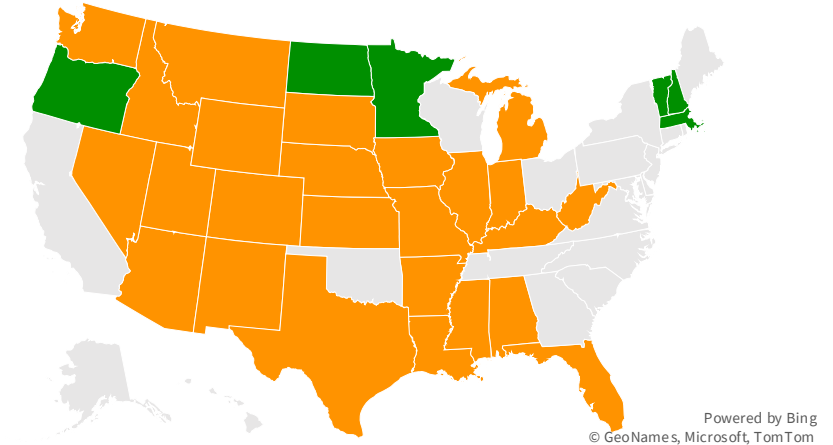
■ Elected ■ Appointed



25 states

partisan-elected chief local election officer

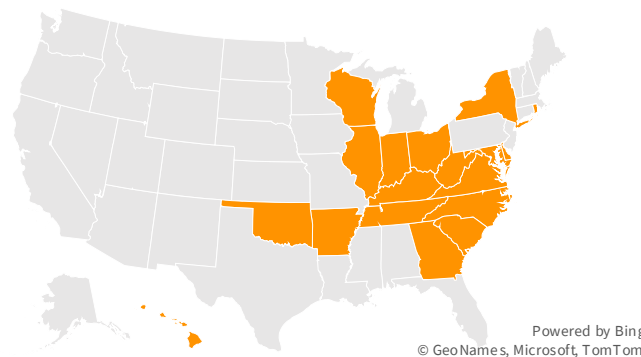
■ Partisan Elected ■ Other Selection Method
■ Nonpartisan Elected



18 states

partisan state election board

■ No Board ■ Partisan Board



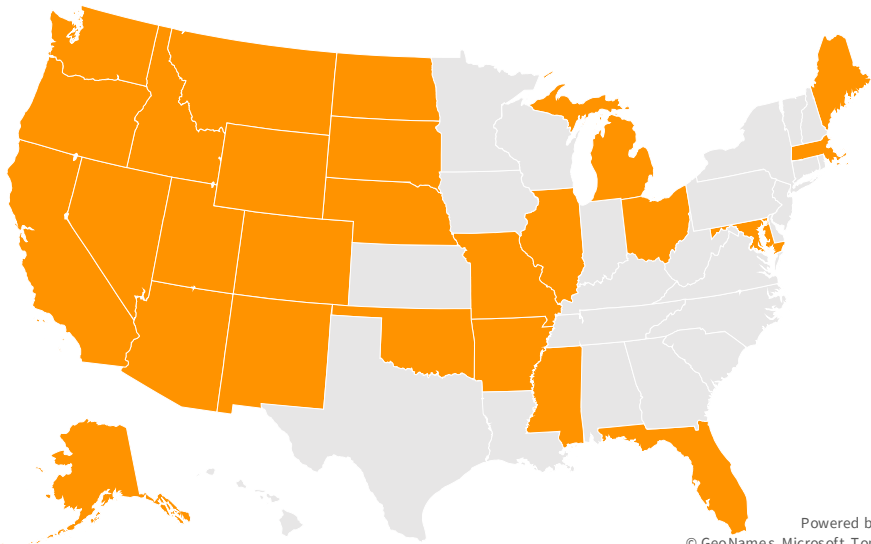
NATIONWIDE PROBLEM

Partisan allegiance in election governance (cont.)

26 states

partisan management of ballot measures

■ No Ballot Measures ■ Partisan Management

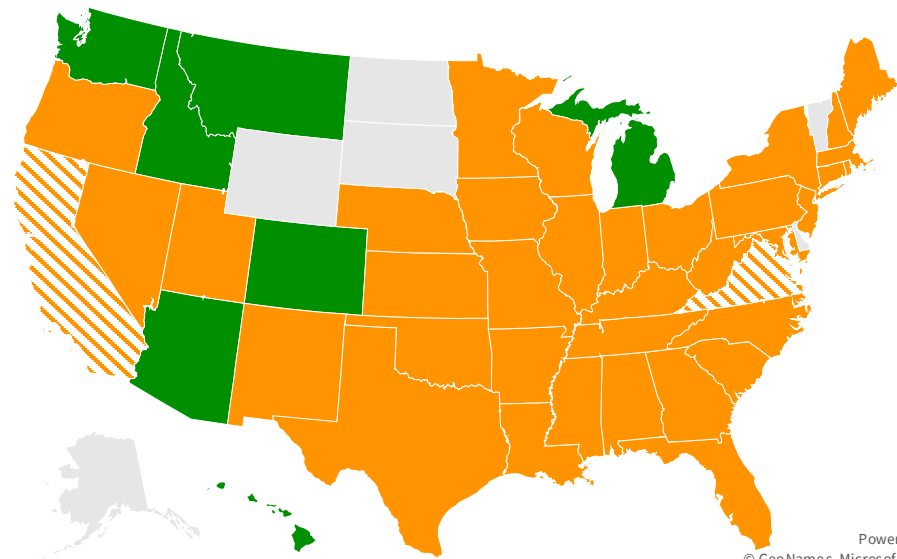


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37 states

partisan-controlled redistricting

■ Partisan Control ■ No Redistricting ■ Independent Commission



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Ethical Frontlines: Impartiality Challenges Facing Local Election Officials

Date Released: April 29, 2026

Author: Election Reformers Network

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ElectionReformers.org

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Examples of abuses of power, directed at LEOs

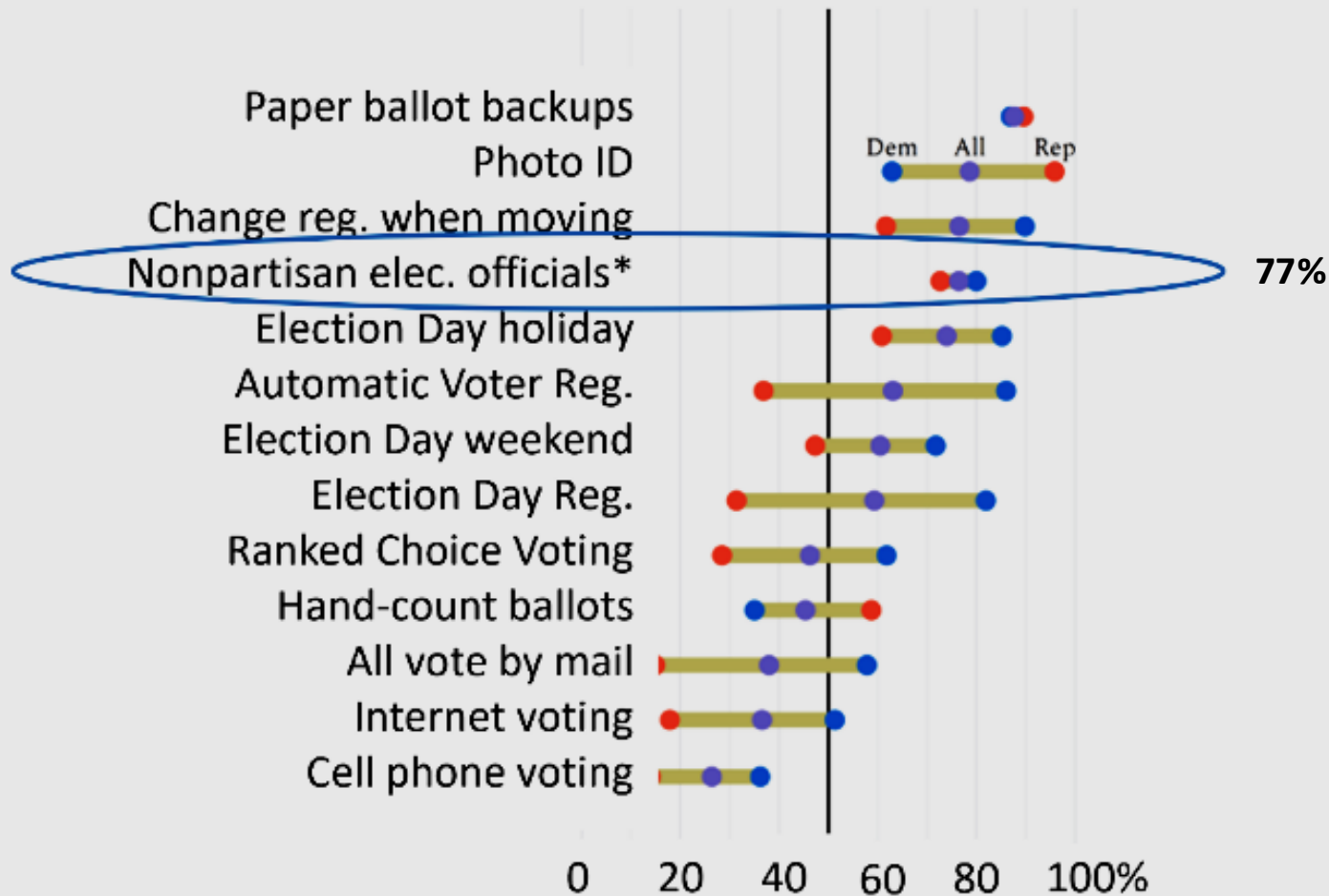
- Claims of Fraud:** Local party officials urging an LEO to falsely support claims of fraud in an election
- Certification:** County party chairs urging LEO not to certify election
- Counting Room:** A US Senator calling—into the counting room—to ask the LEO to modify an election procedure
- Primary Threats:** Getting primaried for not saying election was stolen
- Staff Meddling:** Calls from a county party to fire an election staffer

ERN'S MENU FOR CHANGE

There are many ways to reduce political party influence over election governance

| Tools: Roles: | Voluntary change | Incremental legal change | Deeper structural change |
|---|--|--|---|
| Partisan-elected clerks: 25 states | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded ethics training (happening in CO, FL) Voluntary conflict of interest (COI) policies when sitting clerks run for office (happening in WA) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal bans on endorsements and fundraising Required COI prevention when running for office Repeal of laws that strengthen party connection with clerks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using local options to convert clerk races to nonpartisan (happening in WA and MN) Or to appointment (happening in MT) State law requiring nonpartisan election (used in CA, ND) |
| Party-nominated election boards: 18 states | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded ethics training (happening in VA) Codes of conduct (happening in VA) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal bans endorsements and fundraising | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restructure boards to include members not nominated by the parties (in progress in VA) |
| Partisan-elected secs of state (SOS): 33 states | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Codes of conduct Voluntary COI policies when SOS runs for office (happening in MI) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal bans of endorsements and fundraising Required COI policies when SOS runs for office (happening in UT) Ban on running for higher office for some years after service | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nonpartisan election of SOS Redefining roles to be responsible for elections only Change to appointment (probably by a new board) |

“Do you support or oppose any of the following proposals for new ways of voting or conducting elections?”



PUBLIC OPINION
Voters want impartiality reforms

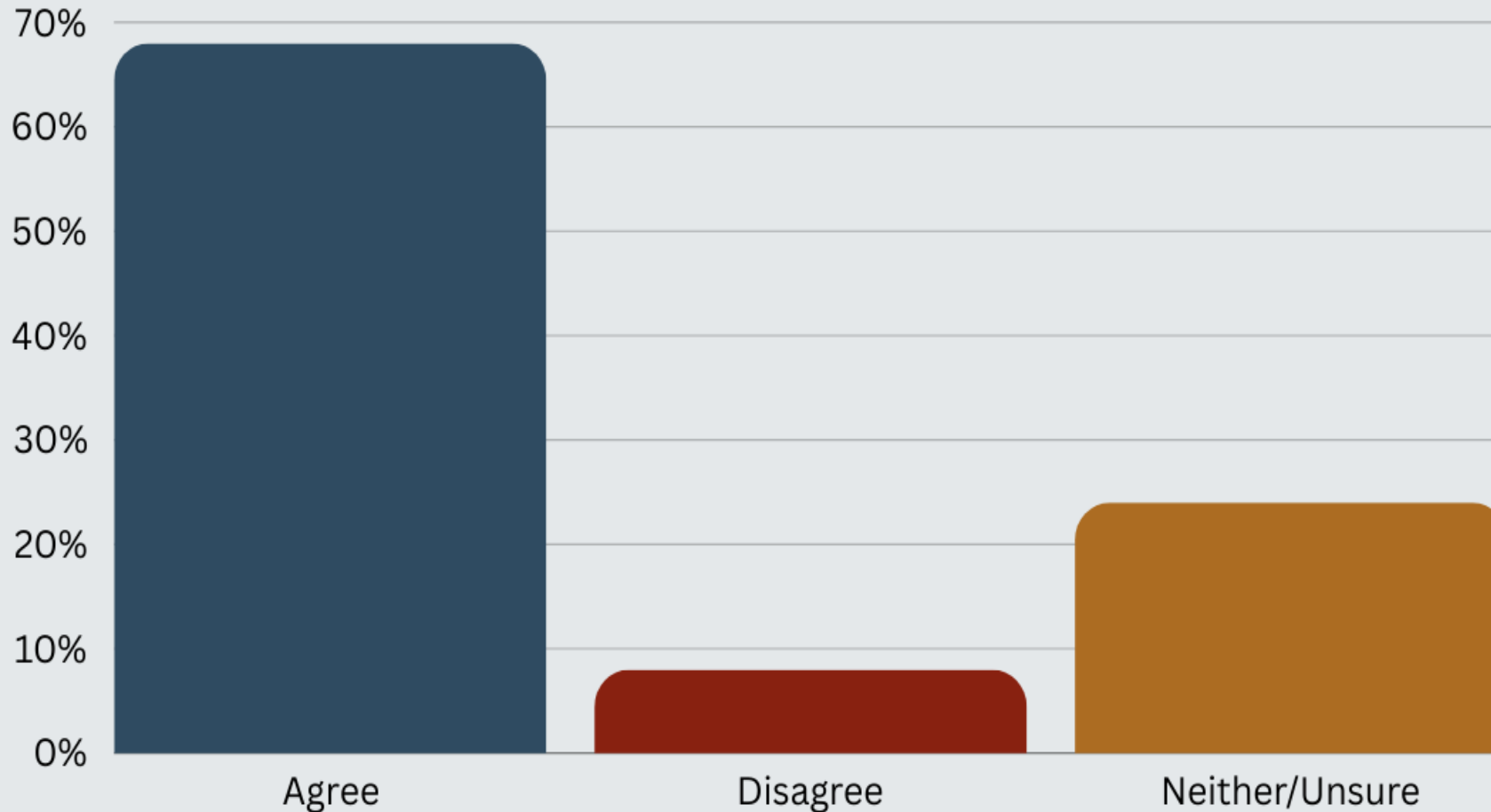
Large bipartisan majorities support **“only selecting election officials on a nonpartisan basis.”**

- Only one other reform, paper ballot backups, has more bipartisan support.
- (Almost all other reforms have a major “party spread” between Democratic voters (blue dots) and Republican voters (red dots.)

Survey of the Performance of American Elections 2022. MIT Election Data + Science Lab.

It is difficult to trust the impartiality of an election official elected with the support of a political party.

AGREE OR DISAGREE? N=1498



PUBLIC OPINION
Partisan election admin is a growing source of distrust

How to get involved in reform.

LEARN

- The issues aren't simple, and media get things wrong – on both sides.
- Focus on structural problems.

GIVE

- How important is our democracy to you?
- Contribute accordingly.

DO

- Pro bono help
- Spread the word
- “Friendraise”

Thank you to key partners!



Bipartisan Policy Center

and



**For funding and support for our
LEO ethics research**



NATIONAL ALLIANCE
FOR AN ENDURING DEMOCRACY

**For partnership in our election official
conflict of interest reform work**

Upcoming Events

Nonpartisanship works:

Case studies from other democracies



Briefing May 21, 12:30-1:30 EST

Ethical Frontlines:

Key learnings from LEOs



Briefing or Substack Live; TBD

Check electionreformers.org/events for updates

Wait, there's more!

Website: electionReformers.org

Substack: democracyguardrail.substack.com

Newsletter signup: electionreformers.org/#SignUp

Support this work: electionreformers.org/donate

