



Committee Republicans’ Report Highlights How Ballot Harvesting is Ripe for Voter Fraud & Abuse

The Committee on House Administration and its Subcommittee on Elections are responsible for all matters related to election law and are charged with investigating election irregularities. In our report, the committee examines the use of ballot harvesting – when any individual can pick up any voter’s ballot for any reason and deliver it to the polling location completely unchecked – in the 2018 Midterm Congressional Elections. Specifically, the report looks at two states: North Carolina, which overturned an election because of the fraud associated with ballot harvesting, and California, which maximized and politically weaponized its use in 2018. The report highlights the fraud and abuse associated with ballot harvesting.

The work of the committee Republicans over the last 18 months has been to bring awareness to potentially the greatest threat to ballot integrity in this country: ballot harvesting. Our goal remains to prevent this practice, which jeopardizes the integrity of our electoral process and disenfranchises voters.

North Carolina

In 2018, North Carolina’s 9th Congressional election was overturned because of practices of ballot harvesting. In the days after the election for the North Carolina’s 9th Congressional District, affidavits were submitted by voters and by individuals who worked for McRae Dowless, a political consultant to the Republican candidate. One voter attested that she handed her signed absentee ballot over to Dowless but left her ballot blank. One individual hired by Dowless to pick up ballots testified that she was instructed to pick up ballots and deliver them to Dowless’s office, where he allegedly had stacks of absentee ballots on his desk. Additionally, an analysis of absentee ballots received over the course of the election concluded that the rate of unreturned absentee ballots was “significantly irregular,” probably affecting the outcome of the election.

Ultimately, the North Carolina State Board of Elections declined to certify the result of North Carolina’s 9th Congressional election “in light of claims of numerous irregularities and concerted fraudulent activities related to absentee by-mail ballots and potentially other matters,” and ordered a new election be held.

The ballot harvesting ban in North Carolina played a key role in catching election fraud and the state passed a law to strengthen protections against its practice.

California

Now, we turn to California where the initial activity that caused suspicion in North Carolina would likely fly under the radar in California where harvesting ballots is commonplace, and no basic safeguards exist.

The use of ballot harvesting is relatively new and has no supervision in California, this has led to paid political operatives, known as “ballot brokers,” seeking out and pressuring voters to vote by mail. These ballot brokers identify specific locations, encourage voters to use the vote-by-mail system, and even assist voters in filling out their ballots before delivering them to a polling location.

Ballot brokers played a critical role in the 2018 midterm election which was evident post-election night when harvested ballots were counted in the weeks after election day. Below is a chart that shows the discrepancies between election night margins and final vote margins across California in the 2018 midterm. In the congressional districts listed in the chart, seven Republican candidates were leading on election night, then later lost weeks after the election because of the delay in counting mail ballots, many of which were harvested.

Cong. District	Election Night Vote Tally	Election Night Vote Margin	Final Vote Result	Final Vote Margin	Post-Election Night Margin
CA-10	Denham (R): 56,701 Harder (D): 55,414	Denham (+1,287)	Harder (D): 115,945 Denham (R): 105,955	Harder (+9,990)	Harder (+11,277)
CA-21	Valadao (R): 35,416 Cox (D): 30,577	Valadao (+4,839)	Cox (D): 57,239 Valadao (R): 56,377	Cox (+862)	Cox (+5701)
CA-25	Hill (D): 83,662 Knight (R): 79,545	Hill (+4,117)	Hill (D): 133,209 Knight (R): 111,813	Hill (+21,369)	Hill (+17,252)
CA-39	Kim (R): 76,956 Cisneros (D): 73,077	Kim (+3,879)	Cisneros (D): 126,002 Kim (R): 118,391	Cisneros (+7,611)	Cisneros (+11,490)
CA-45	Walters (R): 94,998 Porter (D): 88,765	Walters (+6,233)	Porter (D): 158,906 Walters (R): 146,383	Porter (+12,523)	Porter (+18,756)
CA-48	Rouda (D): 91,750 Rohrabacher (R): 89,068	Rouda (+2,682)	Rouda (D): 157,837 Rohrabacher (R): 136,899	Rouda (+20,938)	Rouda (+18,256)
CA-49	Levin (D): 76,135 Harkey (R): 69,031	Levin (+7,104)	Levin (D): 166,453 Harkey (R): 128,577	Levin (+37,876)	Levin (+30,772)

Lack of Safeguards on Ballot Harvesting

Unlimited ballot harvesting lacks checks and balances on this election system, jeopardizing the integrity of the electoral process and disenfranchising voters.

1. There is no way to track who drops off ballots to polling locations.

- There is no system keeping track of the person turning in ballots, whether they are affiliated with a campaign, or what their relationship is to the voters.

2. There is no way to track the quantity of ballots that are dropped off at one time.

- Collecting huge quantities of ballots raises the potential for fraud, making one person responsible for hundreds.

3. There is no way to determine the chain of custody of ballots.

- Campaign workers, also known as ballot brokers, could go to your home, collect your ballot, and leave it in their car for days before dropping it off at a polling location. They could hand it off to a friend or coworker to deliver it. These ballots can become lost, stolen, or even purposefully destroyed.

What We Are Doing to Eliminate Ballot Harvesting:

In conjunction with this report, Ranking Member Davis has introduced a bill to discourage states from adopting the easily corruptible practice of ballot harvesting. The legislation would amend the Help America Vote Act to prohibit funds disbursed through the Election Assistance Commission from going to states that allow ballot harvesting by any individual.

- It allows for common sense exceptions for election officials, employees of the U.S. Postal Service, family members of the voter, household members of the voter, and caregivers of the voter.
- Limiting ballot collection to certain individuals would help to secure the integrity of absentee and mail ballots while providing flexibility to those that require assistance in casting their ballot.

While Ranking Member Davis continues to respect states' choices on how to run their elections, the blatant disregard for security and transparency in California's ballot harvesting practice requires immediate action. Ballot harvesting in California lacks clear oversight mechanisms to prevent and detect fraud and allows for the collecting of votes without clear chain of custody protection of ballots. It is vital to understand the damage ballot harvesting has on election integrity and work together to ensure steps are taken to eliminate this threat.

After 18 months of work, there has still been no movement from House Democrats to even discuss putting safeguards around ballot harvesting, much less eliminating it. Why don't Democrats want to talk about ballot harvesting?