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ACRU Election Integrity Bulletin

FEDERAL

NBC News: Washington, D.C. May Let 16-Year-Olds Vote for President. Is That a Good Idea?

Washington is on track to become the first place in the country to allow people as young as 16 to vote in federal elections, including for president, as the nation glimpses the emerging political power of the generation that follows millennials. It's part of a burgeoning movement in the U.S. and abroad as a growing number of cities and states consider ways to expand voting rights to younger people. Takoma Park, Maryland, just over the border from Washington, became the first jurisdiction in the country to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in 2013. Since then, a handful of other progressive cities have followed, the largest being Berkeley, California.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/elections/washington-d-c-may-let-16-year-olds-vote-president-n866481>

Maine Supreme Court Comment Clouds Windows into Ranked-Choice Voting's Future

A comment during supreme court arguments on ranked-choice voting offers a window into where many fear that things are headed—more legal challenges. Justice Donald Alexander questioned whether the system that lets voters rank candidates could violate the “one man, one vote” principle. His colleagues suggested that's an argument for later. The court is currently considering other constitutional questions. But his suggestion underscores critics' worries that more lawsuits will be filed if the voting

system is used in the June 12 primaries. “The brief exchange indicates the expectation, or fear, that the case will come back after an election because the loser will probably try to get it overturned,” said Jim Burke, professor at the University of Maine School of Law. The voting system under consideration would allow Mainers to rank candidates on the ballot in order of preference. A candidate with a majority of votes wins. If there's no majority, the last-place candidate's second-place votes are reallocated to remaining candidates.

<http://wgme.com/news/local/maine-supreme-court-comment-clouds-windows-into-ranked-choice-votings-future>

AOL: Signs of Struggles on Big Cases as Supreme Court Pace Slackens

Members of the U.S. Supreme Court appeared to be struggling over how to resolve a key case recently when Justice Stephen Breyer suggested that the best course might be to put off a decision altogether. Breyer's remark, coming during a March 28 oral argument in a closely watched case involving the redrawing of electoral districts aimed at entrenching one party in power, illustrated the difficulty the nine justices seem to be having in producing rulings at their usual pace. Numerous major cases have yet to be resolved, including one on Wisconsin electoral boundaries heard in October and the similar one heard last month involving the same practice of “partisan gerrymandering” in Maryland that prompted Breyer to suggest the justices rehear the whole matter in the future.

<https://www.aol.com/article/news/2018/04/13/signs-of-struggles-on-big-cases-as-supreme-court-pace-slackens/23410913/>

The Hill: Senators, State Officials to Meet on Election Cybersecurity Bill

Two senators sponsoring legislation to secure digital election systems from cyberattacks are meeting Monday with state officials on the details of their proposal. Sens. James Lankford (R-Okla.) and Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) are scheduled to meet with secretaries of state to discuss the Secure Elections Act, a spokesman for Lankford confirmed. The senators rolled out a revised version of the proposal in March, after some state officials, who are responsible for administering federal elections, expressed concerns with the effort.

<http://thehill.com/policy/cybersecurity/383374-senators-state-officials-to-meet-on-election-cybersecurity-bill>

STATES

Maine: Legislature ‘Paralyzed’ by Ranked-Choice Voting

Maine political analysts Phil Harriman and John Richardson say justices of the Maine Supreme Judicial Court were right to scold the legislature for not resolving problems with Ranked-Choice Voting.

<http://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/local/political-brew-legislature-paralyzed-by-ranked-choice-voting-april-15th-2018/97-538449554>

Texas: More Democrats Challenge Primary Election Results over ‘Voter Fraud’

Two Texas Democrat candidates, who lost their respective races by razor-thin margins in the March 2018 Primary, are challenging results in a new lawsuit. It alleges the winning Democrats committed voter fraud in a county already fraught with investigations into alleged mail ballot irregularities. Note: ACRU has a pending case under the National Voter Registration Act in Starr County, Texas.

<http://www.breitbart.com/texas/2018/04/12/texas-democrats-challenge-primary-election-results-voter-fraud/>

Texas: White Voters Seek Protection under the Voting Rights Act in Case Against Dallas County

Are white voters in Dallas County being discriminated against? That question, which might cause some to chuckle, will be answered after a trial starting April 16 that could change the face of the voting rights struggle in America. Four white residents are suing Dallas County, claiming that the current boundaries of county commissioner districts violate their voting rights. The case is believed to be one of the first in the nation where a group of whites is seeking protection under the Voting Rights Act. In their effort to get the case dismissed, lawyers for the county wrote, “This amended complaint does not remotely approach establishing a violation of federal law.” U.S. District Judge Sidney Fitzwater disagreed and allowed the lawsuit to move forward.

<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/dallas-county/2018/04/06/dallas-county-discriminate-white-voters-trial-voting-rights-lawsuit-begin>

Wisconsin: Gov. Walker Denies AG Schimel’s Claim Voter ID Law Won 2016 Election

Attorney General Brad Schimel is claiming that some elected officials from the 2016 election only won because of Wisconsin’s voter ID laws. Last week Schimel suggested to conservative radio host Vicki McKenna (WISN) that Donald Trump and Senator Ron Johnson won in Wisconsin because of its voter ID law. Governor Walker did not agree or disagree those laws in place were a factor, but did insist both won in because of how they connected with voters.

<http://www.wkow.com/story/37969829/2018/04/Monday/gov-walker-denies-ag-schimels-claim-voter-id-law-won-2016-election>

(More)

Virginia: Elections Officials Warn of Group's 'Confusing' Mailers About Registration Status

The Virginia Department of Elections says it has received numerous phone calls from concerned voters who had received “confusing mail” suggesting that their voter registration status was in question. The mailers did not come from state elections officials. They came from the Voter Participation Center, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization—unaffiliated with government—that says it seeks to register “under-represented Americans,” specifically “unmarried women, people of color and millennials.” A sample of the mailer, provided by the Voter Participation Center, begins: “According to our review of publicly available records, you reside in Loudoun County, but do not appear to be currently registered to vote. Virginia law requires that all eligible citizens must register if they wish to exercise their right to vote.”

http://www.richmond.com/news/virginia/government-politics/virginia-elections-officials-warn-of-group-s-confusing-mailers-about/article_b90f3d98-9d77-5c0f-8887-ae9ac527cf80.html

Vox: It's Harder for Democrats to Gerrymander Effectively

Democrats draw favorable maps for themselves when they can, and in the future may have more state legislatures under their control to draw maps for. As recently as 2002, a Democratic-drawn map for Texas gave Democrats a majority of its US House delegation long after national realignment had turned it into a red state. The geographical reality, however, is that this is a game Republicans are going to play more effectively on a systematic basis. So, rules requiring districts to fairly represent the overall voting behavior of the state would, in the long run, be better for Democrats—unless they stop being the preferred party of racial minorities or residential segregation vanishes as a phenomenon.

<https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/4/2/17173158/democrats-gerrymander-segregation>

REDISTRICTING

Pennsylvania: GOP Overhauls Bill Proposing Independent Redistricting Commission

The Pennsylvania legislature would get more control over how state legislative boundary lines are drawn under an amended bill that passed out of the House Government Committee along party lines. The original bill removed lawmakers from the process in favor of an independent citizens' commission. State Rep. Daryl Metcalfe, R-Butler, says lawmakers are the most accountable of anyone who might be tasked with legislative reapportionment. “The best way to make sure we have citizens actually being the ones redrawing, citizens who are held accountable to their fellow citizens who elect them to office, and are not just going to go away after the work is done, and be held accountable in the future for their decisions, is to totally gut and replace this bill,” said Metcalfe, committee chairman.

<https://whyy.org/articles/gop-guts-bill-proposing-independent-redistricting-commission/>