Republicans Pass State Laws to Restrict Voting Rights: A Return to Jim Crow

written by Dan La Botz | May 12, 2021

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Trump, who now completely dominates the Republican Party, continues to claim that President Joseph Biden and the Democrats won in 2020 through election fraud. Election authorities of both major parties around the country have demonstrated that there was no significant voter fraud. Trump and the Republicans have attributed the fraud primarily to early voting and mail ballots—both common practices in the United States—so their new legislation is aimed principally at restricting those.

Leading the charge are Republicans in Georgia, where two Democrats won the last Senate election, one the first black senator and the other the first Jew in the state's history, securing the Democrats control of the Senate. So far, Republicans have proposed 250 new laws in 43 states, most of which would limit early voting and mail ballots, but some would introduce stricter identification requirements or shorten voting hours. Other laws would give more power to partisan poll watchers. These restrictive laws have the greatest impact on black, urban, working class, and elderly voters.

All of this is crucial for the November 8, 2022 election in which all 435 House seats and a third of Senate seats are up for election. Democrats at present have a narrow majority of six votes in the House, 218 to 212, while the Senate is tied 50-50, with Democratic vice-president Kamala Harris having the deciding vote, though Senate votes usually require a 60-40 majority because of long-standing conservative rules.

Only 25 percent of voters say they're Republican, compared to 31 percent who identify as Democrats and 41 percent who consider themselves independents. Yet, Republicans have a good chance to taking over the U.S. Congress in the mid-term elections. How is that?

First, Republicans can compensate for their low level of support by making it harder for others to vote, which is why we have the blizzard of new election laws.

Second, every ten years the United States conducts a census, after which representatives are reapportioned, with states whose population grew getting more representatives and states whose population stagnated or shrank getting fewer. In 2020, the states that gained seats, like Texas, Florida, Montana and North Carolina, were mostly Republican, while Democratic states like New York and California lost seats. So Republican are likely to win more House seats in the next

Congress.

Third, also related to the census, following reapportionment, state governments redraw their electoral districts. In most states, that means that the ruling party redraws the districts in ways that will enhance its strength and diminish that of its rival, for example by cutting up a Democratic area into quarters and attaching each quarter to a larger Republican area.

The Democrats are filing court cases against the new state laws and writing a federal law to protect voter rights. Many companies such as Netflix, Amazon, Apple, Alphabet (Google), ViacomCBS, American Express and Home Depot have also condemned Georgia's new law.

The Atlanta, Georgia chapter of Democratic Socialists of America, which is actively involved in opposing the Republican assault on voting rights in that state, says that the new law: "…is indefensible; it restricts voting methods, adds complicated and inaccessible hoops, allows the state to intervene in county elections processes, and bans voters taking care of each other while waiting for hours in lines."