

## **What Is The Reality Behind Voter Fraud**

The [Republican caucuses in Nevada in February 2016](#), dropped into chaos with numerous reports of double voting and biased caucus volunteers who were photographed wearing Donald Trump "Make America Great Again" at caucus sites.

Vote-counting, alongside voter registration errors, were also reported at sites across the state. The cause appears to have been an extremely high turnout as many sites ran out of paper ballots.

Nevada's GOP told PBS's John Ralson that they were addressing the concerns. "Obviously, we take accusations of double-voting very seriously." The state GOP tweeted: "There have been no official reports of voting irregularities or violations."

Reports from dozens of sites contradicted the GOP's claim of no problem.

Caucuses are not government by law, and their rules are found in the GOP bylaws. However, even those rules were brazenly flouted or not clearly defined.

The rule against wearing candidate apparel is based more on tradition than any codified statute — but even that is not clear.

Nevada is not alone in dealing with allegations of voter [fraud](#). Nationally cases from Missouri to North Dakota and California to Maine have been discussed in [The Truth About Voter Fraud](#) by Justin Levitt.

The reasons why many of the allegations are false are explained as well.

### **"Real" Fraud? Or Something Else Going On?**

Whenever voting fraud is cited, Americans notice. Voter fraud feels like a car wreck on the interstate — people don't want to look, but they can't turn away.

Almost each time a politician loses a vote, voter fraud is raised. Allegations of voter fraud are often exaggerated. A simple way to make headlines with a wild claim, the follow-up is not newsworthy. The accusations don't pan out.

Inflated claims of voter fraud are harmful. Crying "wolf" when the assertions are not real takes energy away from real problems that demand real answers. The ability to move past a fixation on voter fraud will shift the focus on real challenges.

Claims of voter fraud are often used to justify policies which don't solve the wrongs, but may alienate legitimate voters. Overly restrictive voter ID laws are one example — but it is the most prominent.

### **Define Voter Fraud**

Voter fraud is a fraud perpetrated by voters. It is that simple. Voter fraud is often shaken and mixed with other forms of election [misbehavior](#) or irregularities. Some problems which are lumped under the "voter fraud" umbrella can be honest mistakes by election officials or voters.

When every problem with an election is blamed on "voter fraud" it appears that fraud is more common than it really is. This, in turn, pushes inappropriate policy. By boosting the perceived prevalence of fraud, policymakers find it easier to justify restrictions on who votes.

## **The Landscape**

Nicholas Wooldridge, Esq – a [criminal defense lawyer in Las Vegas NV](#) – assumes it is not difficult to find opinion pieces which claim that voter fraud is a major issue. Aside from a trickle of stories about low-grade fraud, there are few sources which recount specific incidents of voter fraud.

The most nefarious source are documents prepared by the American Center for Voting Rights — ACVR. Established in 2005, ACVR went under just twenty-four months later. [ACVR only produced two reports](#). The first compiling fraud allegations in Ohio in 2004 and the second compiling allegations in 2004 — nationwide. The ACVR repeated these and other allegations in amicus briefs filed in court to support voter identification laws.

The bogus information also found its way into a 2000 article in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and again in a 2004 article in the New York Daily News.

## **Voter Fraud and the Press**

The most frequent example of inflated claims of voter fraud is the drum beat for in-person photo identification. The photo ID laws only prevent individuals from impersonating other voters — an occurrence which is rarer than getting hit by lightning.

However, by throwing all types of election problems under the umbrella, advocates for the laws inflate the apparent need for the restrictions.

Photo ID laws are detrimental to eligible citizens and are beneficial only if they solve more problems than they create.

When fraud is alleged, the allegations tend to fall into one of four categories:

- Individuals intentionally submitting forms in someone else's name to make a point or to have some fun.
- Registration forms tendered by qualified voters, but with mistakes — not deception at all.
- Registration drive workers who have been paid for their time or on commission depending on how many forms they submit, and
- Individuals who change the registration of an eligible voter to stymie their ability to vote.

The incidents are rare and often committed by partisans.

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