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WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF INDIANA ATTORNEY GENERAL TODD ROKITA ON S.1

Senate Committee on Rules and Administration March 24, 2021

Thank you Chairwoman Klobuchar, Ranking Member Blunt, and members of the Committee for inviting me to speak to you today on S.1 the "For the People Act." My name is Todd Rokita, and I serve as the Attorney General for the State of Indiana. Prior to serving as Indiana's chief legal officer, I publicly served our state as a Member of Congress representing Indiana's 4th District and as Indiana's Secretary of State. Given my experience both as Indiana's chief elections officer and as a candidate for both state and federal office, I know how elections can and should be run to ensure transparency and public confidence in elections.

Any effort to address America's election system must begin with recognition of a simple fact: the 2020 Presidential Election was unlike any other in our nation's history. The 2020 election involved an effort to convert what has traditionally been "Election Day" in our country to a months-long process of vote gathering and some would say, "ballot harvesting" that resulted in shaken confidence in our electoral system and a profound unease, if not outright distrust, about the election results. Americans saw mountains of mail-in ballots being processed in cavernous central count processing centers. Tens of millions of mail-in ballots overloaded the processing capacity of the system in many states turning the tabulation of votes into a weekslong process. And in case after case, we saw vote watchers and observers excluded from an opaque, seemingly never-ending, counting process.

Many of the problems of 2020 resulted from the efforts of those without authority to do so trying to control how the election was run and changing election rules at the last minute. This led to an unprecedented number of election lawsuits that frankly outpaced the ability of the courts to keep pace and resolve the cases on the merits.

In 2020 many public officials (many of whom were not popularly elected by the populations they serve) lost sight of the wisdom of the framers of the Constitution, failing to recognize that the Constitution gives each state legislature the authority to determine the "Manner" of federal elections. Art. I, §4, cl. 1; Art. II, §1, cl. 2. This is for good reason as the state legislatures are directly elected by the people they serve. Regrettably, S.1 reflects a continuing unconstitutional effort to circumvent and even usurp the authority of state legislatures to set the rules for U.S. elections, and it seeks to deprive American citizens in their communities of the opportunity to run local elections, which up until recently had been a model of democratic participation.

S.1 seeks to federalize electoral roles that were intended by the Framers to be handled at State and local levels and in doing so threatens all the problems created by a federal takeover of a job that can best be carried out by units of government closest to the people and by the people themselves. In addition to seeking to unconstitutionally federalize the administration of U.S. elections, S.1 would guarantee that all the problems of the 2020 election, including bloated voter rolls, out of control mail in balloting and overly long voting periods would be institutionalized. In short, passage of S.1 would institutionalize failure, distrust, and unreliability in U.S. elections - all the problems of 2020 would be repeated every election, which is why, with all due respect, S.1 might more appropriately be labeled the "Against the People Act." It would strip the ability of the people of our 50 states to run elections and substitute a vast and expansive federal elections bureaucracy that would undermine freedom, fairness, and accountability.

The simple fact is S.1, and the companion bill H.R.1, is a power grab that would federalize and nationalize our elections and erode trust in our electoral system. It would open the door to fraud by removing common sense safeguards, and result in chaos both in 2022 and beyond. The elections of 2020 had numerous irregularities and last-minute modifications issued by judges and election officials which did nothing but sow mistrust with the American public. Enacting many of those misguided policies into law would only create more chaos and distrust in future elections.

As a former Secretary of State who has witnessed first-hand that Americans in every community can be trusted with running free and fair elections, I urge you to resist the urge to federalize U.S. elections. Federalized, national elections run from Washington, D.C. will inevitably result in the exertion of partisan influence on U.S. elections that is national in scope and oppressive in practice.

Local elections controlled and run at the local level, and based upon rules set by the state legislatures, the legislative branch closest to the people, are part of what make us free. By reducing local control, substituting federal control, and upsetting the constitutional balance intended for elections, S.1, if adopted, would make us less free. Nationalized elections would also be less secure and more subject to fraud and undue influence.

S.1 unwisely mandates mail-in balloting on a national-scale, a practice which, until recently, had been significantly limited in most States. Mail-in balloting is recognized as the form of voting most susceptible to fraud by no less an authority than the Commission on Election Reform Chaired by Former President, Jimmy Carter, and former Secretary of State James Baker. There is a reason that many U.S. States disfavor mail-in balloting except in cases of necessity. Unlimited mail-in balloting is virtually unheard of in many democracies, including in most European countries, precisely because it is recognized to be subject to fraudulent voting.

When coupled with bloated voter rolls which S.1 guarantees, mail-in voting is even less secure. Section 1015 of S.1 specifically recognizes that the legislation's mandates related to voter registration will result in tens of thousands of non-citizens being added to voter rolls. This is why S.1 seeks to remove legal penalties for adding non-citizens to the voter rolls. S.1's combination of insecure, mandated voter registration practices and the registration of tens of

thousands of non-citizens, coupled with nationwide, mail-in balloting will make American elections less secure than elections conducted in countless other democracies around the globe. S.1 therefore purposefully pushes American elections towards less security and the prospect that elections for all offices will be influenced by fraudulent votes of individuals not eligible to vote in U.S. elections. These are not the outcomes of an Act that can legitimately be claimed to be "For the People" – these outcomes threaten to undermine the sovereignty of U.S. citizens and to devalue the votes of individual votes of every citizen.

S.1 also removes safeguards like voter ID requirements. While serving as Indiana's Secretary of State and chief elections officer, I led the passage and then the implementation of the first-in-the-nation voter ID law. The law requires in-person voters to present an unexpired government-issued photo ID to vote.

Despite attacks from out-of-state activists, my team helped defend the law all the way to the United States Supreme Court and won. Indiana's voter ID law became a model for the nation. Since then, more than 30 states have followed suit in enacting laws to protect the integrity of our elections. S.1 does away with those commonsense protections, forcing states to allow individuals to vote without an ID. Of course, undermining voter ID will only erode the value of each citizen's vote.

Indiana's voter ID law did not suppress the vote among Democratic-leaning voters or ANY voter for that matter. Rather, it protected their votes. Since Indiana's law went into effect in 2006, the Hoosier State has held 16 statewide elections, 8 municipal elections, and dozens of special elections. Not a single legitimate voter has been turned away from the polls due to the inability to produce a photo ID. Despite best efforts, not a single individual has been identified who was wrongly denied the right to vote.

The mandates of S.1 are wholly unnecessary, and the determinations for how elections are operated should remain with the States as intended by the Framers. The proposed changes will open our elections up to increased voter fraud and irregularities. Regardless of which party or candidate a voter favors, all Americans should have confidence in the outcomes of their elections. No American's vote should be devalued by fraudulent votes.

It has never been clearer to me that voters are concerned about their elections and want to have a voice. States across the country are considering changes to their voting systems. If either S.1 or H.R.1 passes, states will have to reverse course and make changes in compliance with federal law at a tremendous cost to those states. There will also be numerous lawsuits further muddying the electoral waters. Some might say that states should wait for Congress to act, or do not view it as a problem as long as their preferred policy is passed. However, a federal takeover of elections will impose unconstitutional mandates on states and reverse the decentralization of the American election process, opening the door to fraud and abuse.

Earlier this month, 19 of my attorney general colleagues joined me in a letter to Congressional leadership opposing H.R.1. As we wrote in that letter, the Act has several Constitutional deficiencies and mandates that, if passed, would federalize state elections and impose burdensome costs and regulations on state and local officials.

S.1 appears to contain most if not all the defects of H.R.1. However, as this Committee is aware, S.1 is a new bill that was not even publicly available one week ago. It is massive, over 800 pages in length, and this hearing is being held without likely an opportunity of any member of this Committee to have read the bill since it was made publicly available either over the weekend or on Monday. Certainly, there has not been an adequate opportunity for the American public or the many public interest groups interested in elections to fully digest the legislation since it was released literally hours ago.

With respect to the Constitutional deficiencies, the Act regulates "election for Federal office," defined to include "election for the office of President or Vice President." The Act therefore implicates the Electors Clause, which expressly affords "Each State" the power to "appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof my direct," the state's allotment of presidential electors, and separately affords Congress only the more limited power to "determine the Time of chusing the Electors." That exclusive division of power for setting the "manner" and "time" of choosing presidential electors differs from the powers of the Article I Elections Clause, which says that both States and Congress have the power to regulate the "time, place, and manner" of congressional elections. That distinction is not an accident. After extensive debate, the Constitution's Framers deliberately excluded Congress from deciding how presidential electors would be chosen in order to avoid presidential dependence on Congress for position and authority.³ Accordingly, the Supreme Court, in upholding a Michigan statute apportioning presidential electors by district, observed that the Electors Clause "convey[s] the broadest power of determination" and "leaves it to the [state] legislature exclusively to define the method" of appointment of electors.⁴ The exclusivity of state power to "define the method" of choosing presidential electors means that Congress may not force states to permit presidential voting by mail or curbside voting.

Additionally, the regulation of congressional elections, including by mandating mail-in voting, requiring states to accept late ballots, overriding state voter ID laws, and mandating that states conduct redistricting through unelected commissions, also faces constitutional hurdles. Congressional authority to regulate the election of its own members was a "last resort" under "extreme circumstances." Under S.1, Congress would impose near total control and render state legislatures and state elections officers little more than subordinates to their federal overlords. Chief Justice Roberts noted the importance of the states' role when he pointed out that with respect to congressional elections, the Framers "assign[ed] the issue to the state legislatures, expressly checked and balanced by the Federal Congress." Here, through the detailed 800+ page web of rules in S.1 Congress would be not acting as a "check," but instead as the nation's principal election regulator, a role never envisioned by the Constitution's framers.

¹ Sec. 1932

² U.S. Const. Art. II, § 1, cls. 2, 4

³ See 2 Records of the Federal Convention of 1787 109 (M. Farrand ed. 1911)

⁴ *McPherson v. Blacker*, 146 U.S. 1, 27 (1892) (emphasis added).

⁵ See Federalist No. 59. See also Federalist Nos. 60, and 61.

⁶ Rucho v. Common Cause 139 S.Ct. 2484, 2496 (2019).

Under the proportionality doctrine announced in *City of Boerne v. Flores*, ⁷ no other power bestowed by the Constitution permits Congress to confer voting rights disproportionate to what the Constitution itself already protects. However, S.1 purports to does this by, for example, imposing rights to mail-in voting, curbside voting, etc. It appears, instead, to attempt a substantive change in constitutional protections." For example, §1621 would establish a right to vote by mail, but the Supreme Court held in *McDonald v. Bd. of Election Comm'rs of Chicago* that there is no constitutional right to vote absentee, by mail or otherwise. ⁹

What is more, where S.1 requires state officials to carry out new federal rights, it violates the principle that the "[f]ederal Government may neither issue directives requiring the States to address particular problems, nor command the States' officers, or those of their political subdivisions, to administer or enforce a federal regulatory program." In short, it "is so out of proportion to a supposed remedial or preventive object that it cannot be understood as responsive to, or designed to prevent, unconstitutional behavior."

Unfortunately, the constitutional deficiencies and crushing unfunded mandates are the tip of the iceberg. S.1 contains provisions that would circumvent state laws that safeguard our elections, erode confidence in elections, dilute our states' votes in Congress, and attempt to silence Americans for their beliefs.

S.1 seeks to eradicate state laws that protect election integrity by weakening voter identification laws, limiting how states can clean up voter rolls, requiring independent redistricting commissions, among other measures. These are policies that should, as intended by the Constitution, be made and implemented at the state level.

Perhaps most egregious provision is the Act's limitations on voter ID laws. Requiring government-issued photo identification at the polls represents a practical, best practice for election administration. Government-issued photo identification has been the global standard for documentary identification for decades, and, as previously noted, there are numerous occasions which require Americans to show identification. In many instances, to get a COVID-19 vaccine one has to show proof of identification. ¹² One also needs to show identification when purchasing cold medicine. In addition, Americans need to show ID when going through security to board a flight. Why shouldn't the same be true for voting? Increasing access to voting and increasing the security of the ballot are not mutually exclusive, and reduced oversight dilutes the value of each valid vote and makes a mockery of our system.

⁷ 521 U.S. 507, 532 (1997),

⁸ *Id*.

⁹ 394 U.S. 802, 808-810 (1969), see also Texas Democratic Party v. Abbott, 978 F.3d 168, 188 (5th Cir. 2020) ("The Supreme Court distinguished between a right to vote and a right to vote absentee.").

¹⁰ Printz v. United States, 521 U.S. 898, 935 (1997).

¹¹ *City of Bourne* 521 U.S. at 532.

¹² https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-03-03/how-to-sign-up-to-get-your-covid-19-vaccine-appointment-in-los-angeles

Nearly twenty years ago, in the Help America Vote Act, Congress required first-time voters who register by mail without proof of identification to present identification either to the county voter-registration office or at the polls. ¹³ It thereby acknowledged the existence of voter fraud and the capacity of documentary identification to prevent it. ¹⁴ Then, in 2005, a bi-partisan commission headed by former President Jimmy Carter and Secretary of State James Baker recognized the existence of in-person voter fraud and endorsed a photo-identification requirement. In the wake of these endorsements, states, like Indiana, began passing voter ID laws, and over a decade ago the Supreme Court upheld Indiana's voter ID law, still considered as one of the most robust in the nation. ¹⁵

Voter ID laws remain popular, with thirty-five states requiring some form of documentary personal identification at the polls. Yet, S.1 would dismantle meaningful voter ID laws by allowing voters, as a substitute for prior-issued, document-backed identification, to "attest[] to the individual's identity and . . . that the individual is eligible to vote in the election." Allowing someone inclined to vote illegally to do so only by signing a statement does little to ensure that voters are who they say they are. Worse, it vitiates the capacity of voter ID requirements to protect against improper interference with voting rights. Before the advent of voter ID laws, partisans stationed at polling places could challenge voters based only on suspicions about identity, a process that prompted concerns about voter intimidation. Robust voter ID laws, however, require *all* voters to present photo identification, *i.e.*, objective, on-the-spot confirmation of the right to vote that immediately refutes bad-faith challenges based on vaguely articulated suspicions. Fair election laws treat all voters equally. Thus, requiring all voters to show proof of identity is, by definition, a fair election law.

Adding to the threat of increased voter fraud, S.1 would mandate nationwide automatic voter registration and Election Day voter registration. The right to vote is reserved for eligible U.S. citizens and that right must be preserved. Nationwide automatic voter registration is a misguided attempt to increase voter turnout while creating an avenue for increased voter fraud. Such systems would create chaos and provide untold opportunities for non-citizens and others ineligible to vote to register and cast fraudulent ballots before officials can take preventive action. This is an example of what can happen when complex registration systems are rolled out. S.1 would exacerbate these problems by forcing states into nearly impossible timelines and create more opportunity for error. States, not Washington D.C., should determine appropriate methods for voter registration based on their own experiences with voting access and voter fraud.

Mandating same day voter registration is also problematic. Allowing individuals to register at their polling location places an undue burden on local election officials who should be singularly

¹³ 42 U.S.C. § 15483(b).

¹⁴ 148 Cong. Rec. S10489 (Oct. 16, 2002) (statement of Sen. Bond) ("By passage of this legislation, Congress has made a statement that vote fraud exists in this country.").

¹⁵ See Crawford v. Marion County Election Board, 553 U.S. 181 (2008).

¹⁶ https://www.politico.com/news/2021/01/24/republicans-voter-id-laws-461707; Voter Identification Requirements https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-id-aspx

¹⁷ Title I Sub N § 1903.

focused upon making sure that the election is running smoothly. Requiring states to allow unregistered voters to register on election day creates an increased risk of confusion and chaos. We should not be making election officials' job on Election Day any more difficult. Same day registration, as required by S.1, will result in longer waits and delays in voting as poll workers will have little ability to verify voters looking to register. Eligible voters have more than enough time to meet current voter registration deadlines. It is our responsibility as American citizens to make sure that we are registered to vote and that our registration information is updated and correct.

In an age when we have the technology to increase voter security, S.1 would pull us in the opposite direction. Instead of using the technology at our fingertips to protect the integrity of our elections, S.1 would create opportunities for malfeasance. We should be seeking ways to use technology to ensure one person one vote, and that our voter rolls are accurate and up to date. Unfortunately, S.1 removes sensible integrity measures and takes power from the states and transfers it to a powerful few in Washington D.C.

Another way that S.1 would erode the integrity of our elections and not use available technology is by limiting states' ability to maintain accurate voter registration rolls. In fact, according to some reports (analyzing H.R. 1), it would make it nearly impossible for states to clean up voter rolls at all. 18 States and localities work to keep voter registration rolls up to date to account for voters who move or pass away. It should come as a surprise to no one that most citizens are not vigilant about keeping their state and local election boards apprised of changes to residency that may affect the validity of their voter registrations. Consequently, as citizens move about the country, their voter registrations become out-of-date, creating opportunities for voter fraud. As a fraud-prevention measure, states and localities routinely remove the registrations of individuals who (1) have not voted in many consecutive elections, and then (2) fail to respond to multiple efforts to verify current residency. Under S.1, however, States could not use a combination of voter inactivity and unresponsiveness to maintain voter lists but may instead remove illegitimate voter registrations only where officials obtain some other unspecified "objective and reliable evidence that the registrant is ineligible to vote." This attack on reliable methods state have been using to maintain voters lists without specifying any reasonable permissible alternatives belies any actual interest in preventing voter fraud. The objective, rather, seems to be to prevent meaningful voter list maintenance altogether. With out-of-date voter rolls and a lack of voter ID laws, any individual who wishes to vote in-person under someone else's name will be a slip of paper away from making that a reality. And voters know this. Every election, Indiana election officials field calls from voters who noticed on the rolls when voting the name of someone who moved or passed away. Voters are understandably concerned when this occurs, and it diminishes voter confidence in a very concrete way. Unfortunately, S.1 would make it exceedingly difficult to clean up the rolls and concomitantly maintain the confidence of voters.

S.1's mandate that states undertake congressional redistricting by way of so-called "independent" commissions is profoundly misguided. The aim of this provision—to neutralize

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"political" districting—emanates from the incoherent supposition that drawing congressional districts is something other than a political act. Even with "independent commissions," politics will still play a roll. Unfortunately, appointed redistricting officials are entirely unaccountable to the voters whom they are affecting. As with any legislation, drawing boundary lines for congressional districts requires officials to balance legitimate competing considerations, and in so doing, advance some political interests over others. Despite progressive politicians' proclamations to the contrary, the American model of government inherently rejects the idea that elites have some unique capacity to discern and implement the best policies. The American tradition instead embraces political accountability as the best way to advance the public interest. With respect to redistricting, no ideal, perfectly balanced congressional boundaries exist. Accordingly, we should continue to let the people, through their elected officials, decide where to place them, as we have for well over 200 years. Sec. 2415 would allow a three-judge panel to issue district maps. Even worse, it would create a race to file suit in a preferred venue by allowing the District Court of the District of Columbia to serve as a venue to establish districts. With all due respect to the District Court of the District of Columbia, it makes no sense that a district court in Washington D.C. is best situated to establish congressional districts in Indiana or any other state. The mere suggestion indicates that the authors believe American citizens are viewed as subjects who need their betters in Washington D.C. to make decisions about their "representation" for them.

Nor is it likely that states will be able to meet the deadlines for redistricting based on the 2020 census. States are not expected to receive the information they need to redistrict until late summer or early fall. If S.1 were to be implemented, states would have an enormous amount of work to do to stand up a new agency²⁰, appoint members, fulfill all notice requirements, and comply with the law in its entirety by late fall. If a state misses a "triggering event" then suit can be filed.²¹ Moreover, all constitutional challenges are moved to the District Court of Washington, D.C. It is therefore reasonable to expect that if S.1 were passed, a majority of states would have their districts drawn by panels of judges in Washington, D.C., either due to a "triggering event" or due to Constitutional challenges pushing back implementation. Not only would this system preempt state laws, but it would also completely remove states from the process. This is antithetical to the system established by the Famers which put responsibility for the manner of holding elections for federal office with state legislatures, not federal judges in Washington, D.C. Moreover, the overly prescriptive way S.1 is drafted impermissibly intrudes upon the exclusive authority of the States to establish the rules for states offices as well.

Removing voter ID requirements while simultaneously requiring automatic voter registration and making it difficult to clean up voter rolls will not only result in confusion and chaos, but it will also be expensive for states to implement. According to one report, the voting machines required by S.1 do not yet exist.²² Nor does S.1 provide appropriate funding for the machines. But this is hardly the only unfunded mandate. As mentioned above, states will be

²⁰ Sec. 2414

²¹ Sec. 2442

²² Jessica Huseman, "How this Voting Rights Bill Could Turn the Next Election Into a Clusterf*ck." The Daily Beast, March 20, 2021. https://www.thedailybeast.com/how-this-votingrights-bill-could-turn-the-next-election-into-a-clusterfck.

required to create a new agency in the legislative branch.²³ In addition to the Constitutional concerns with requiring a state to establish an agency, S.1 does not provide funding for the agency and the work the agency is tasked with performing. Section 3001 provides that states are not to receive less than \$1 per the average number of voters in the last two elections. However, this will likely not come close to the amount needed to cover the cost of the new machines. From 2005-2009, Indiana spent \$40 million on voting machines. Based on that amount, Indiana would need closer to \$7 per *Hoosier*, not just per voter.

Perhaps the most chilling aspect of the Act would require the disclosure of certain organizations' donor lists. The purpose of requiring not-for-profits to disclose donor names is to name, shame, and destroy those who do not walk-in lockstep with the prevailing woke mob line of thought. The effect of such a requirement will be to intimidate and chill into silence potential future donors from making donations. The harms on everyday Americans when the woke cancelculture mob comes after them, their jobs, and their families will be felt for generations to come. Americans will be faced with the untenable choice of contributing to their candidates of choice or deciding not to contribute to avoid being subject to cancellation by those who disagree with their political choices and viewpoints. Sadly, this is just one part of a larger censorship agenda taking place in this country today. Already most Americans feel the need to self-censor their political beliefs.²⁴ Instead of limiting speech, congressional leaders should be condemning those that would "cancel" people they disagree with, while encouraging more speech and robust debate. It is wrong and simply un-American to attempt to suppress people's beliefs or viewpoints through intimidation, and this behavior should not have Congress' tacit approval. Indeed, Congress has a poor record at the Supreme Court when it tries to chill Americans' political speech in violation of our First Amendment protections.²⁵

Finally, the provisions for public funding of congressional elections are another feature of the legislation which has not been adequately studied and threaten to create a greater divide between legislators and their constituents by reducing dependance on grassroots fundraising.

In sum, the measures proposed in S.1 turn our constitutional elections structure on its head. They would open the door for greater fraud and less confidence in our elections. Our system of governance depends on the electorate having faith in the outcome of our elections. Removing voter integrity measures such as voter ID laws, requiring votes to be counted up to 10 days after election day²⁶, requiring that unaccountable commissions, and even DC judges far removed from the states drawing districts, and other measures will completely erode voters' faith in elections. Voters should have a voice, through their elected representatives, in how their elections are run.

²³ Sec. 2414.

²⁴ Emily Ekins, *Poll: 62% of Americans Says They Have Political Views They're Afraid to Share*. https://www.cato.org/survey-reports/poll-62-americans-say-they-have-political-views-theyre-afraid-share#liberals-are-divided-political-expression (last visited February 18, 2021).

²⁵ See e.g. *Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1 (1976) and *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, 558 U.S. 310 (2010).

²⁶ Sec. 1621.

While the bill portends to apply only to federal elections, the simple fact is that these changes will apply across the board. States do not have the funds to enact the changes proposed by the bill, much less then have two competing election systems – one for federal elections and another for state and local elections. States should continue to hold elections in a manner that best suits each state. S.1 would take control entirely away from states and dictate uniform voter registration and Election Day processes across the country. Simply, if states are laboratories, the passage of S.1 would declare the 50 state laboratories closed.

Despite recent calls for political unity, in untold ways the Act takes a one-sided approach to governing and usurps states' authority over elections. With confidence in elections at a record low, the country's focus should be on building trust in the electoral process. Around the country, the 2020 general elections generated mass confusion and distrust—problems that the Act would only exacerbate. Should the Act become law, I am prepared to seek legal remedies to protect the Constitution, the sovereignty of all states, our elections, and the rights of our Indiana citizens.

²⁷ Justin McCarthy, *Confidence in Accuracy of U.S. Elections Matches Record Low* https://news.gallup.com/poll/321665/confidence-accuracy-election-matches-record-low.aspx (last visited February 19, 2021).