

February 16, 2021



VOTING RIGHTS LAB



TO: Interested Parties

FR: Strategies 360 Research

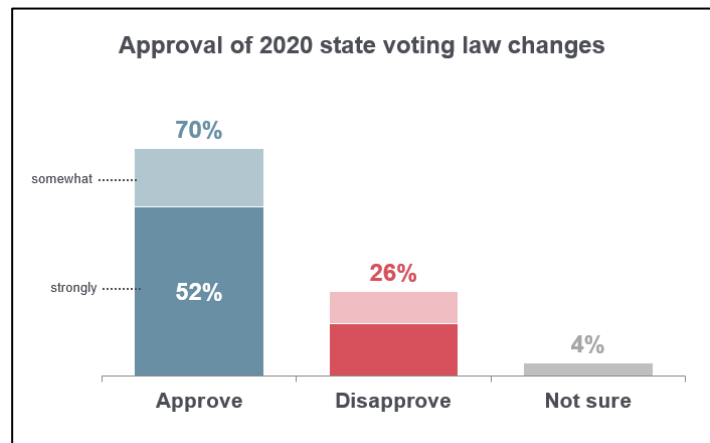
RE: New Survey Reveals Broad Support for Pro-Voter Policy Changes

A new national survey<sup>1</sup> conducted by Strategies 360 a week into the Biden administration finds that American voters have clear preferences when it comes to laws surrounding voting and elections. In particular, they firmly reject recent state legislation restricting eligible Americans' ability to vote safely, securely, and in a convenient manner. They laud the expansion of absentee voting in 2020 and look for states to build upon this progress for future elections.

This survey assesses public opinion toward more than two-dozen policies related to voting and elections, including proposed legislation affecting voter registration, early voting, absentee voting, and the tallying of votes. The picture that emerges is one of an electorate largely pleased with state efforts to make voting more accessible to all eligible Americans and hungry to continue such reforms. Support for pro-voter reforms is broad and spans partisan lines; restrictive policies appeal to a much smaller (if vocal) minority of voters.

## KEY FINDINGS

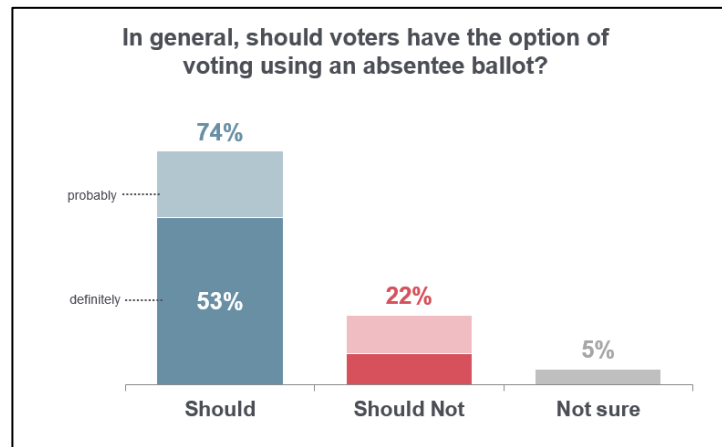
**Americans emphatically endorse states' efforts over the past year to give voters more options for voting safely during the pandemic, including expanding absentee voting.** The pandemic left many states scrambling to update election laws as polls throughout the summer found that nearly half of voters felt unsafe voting in person. States enacted a variety of laws to ensure voters could vote securely without risking their health and safety, most often increasing early voting options and making absentee ballots more widely available. A 70 percent majority of voters approve of these changes while just 26% disapprove.



**The record number of voters who cast an absentee ballot were overwhelmingly satisfied with their experience.** Nearly half of all votes in the 2020 general election were cast by absentee ballot, far more than in any past election. And about a third of absentee voters cast their ballot that way for the first time—14% of the full electorate. Overall, more than 9 in 10 absentee voters were satisfied with their experience casting a ballot. 79% say they *were very satisfied* – 10 points higher than the proportion of in-person voters who say the same. First-time absentee voters had an exceptionally positive experience (91% satisfied).

<sup>1</sup> Strategies 360 conducted a survey of 1002 registered voters nationwide from January 25<sup>th</sup> to February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021. Interviews were conducted online among respondents fully matched to state voter files; the sample was weighted to represent the national population of registered voters. The margin of error for a survey of 1002 interviews is  $\pm 3.1\%$  at the 95% confidence level for each individual sample.

**Voters urge wider adoption of absentee voting in their state.** Healthy majorities of both Republicans (60%) and Democrats (86%) say they were satisfied with the ability of voters to vote absentee in their state in the 2020 general election. Simply put, voters now see absentee voting as a fundamental part of American elections: A 74% majority believe all voters should have the option of voting using an absentee ballot in future elections, including majorities of Republicans (62%), independents (78%), and Democrats (86%). In particular, 70% of Americans support a no-excuse absentee voting system where all registered voters may request an absentee ballot be mailed to them in advance of each election. Support for no-excuse absentee voting includes majorities of men (66%) and women (73%), younger (71%) and older voters (68%), white voters (65%) and voters of color (82%), and Democrats (84%) and Republicans (54%). It includes majorities from every region of the country, including 73% support in key battleground states.<sup>2</sup>



**Americans strongly support reforms which improve and expand access to absentee voting; they forcefully reject policies which impose restrictive requirements on absentee voters.**

- **63% support / 25% oppose** allowing voters to correct errors in submitted absentee ballots, commonly called a 'ballot cure' process.
- **65% believe** election officials should be allowed to begin processing absentee ballots before Election Day, while 25% say officials should only begin processing them starting on Election Day.
- **73% support / 20% oppose** including pre-paid postage on absentee return envelopes.
- **34% support / 57% oppose** requiring voters to notarize an absentee ballot before submitting it.
- **32% support / 55% oppose** eliminating ballot drop-boxes and requiring voters to mail in ballots.
- **31% support / 60% oppose** rejecting ballots mailed before Election Day but arriving later.

**Absentee policies are not the only aspect of voting laws Americans hope to reform: most favor making it easier to register to vote.**

- **73% support / 20% oppose** automatically registering eligible Americans to vote when they interact with government agencies like the DMV, unless they opt out.
- **59% support / 28% oppose** allowing eligible Americans to register to vote online.

**Early voting is also overwhelmingly popular; Americans want to expand it.**

- **67% support / 24% oppose** increasing the number of days of early voting in their state.
- **68% support / 24% oppose** keeping early voting locations open on nights and weekends.

Support for early voting again spans demographic, partisan, and regional lines. 70% of voters in battleground states support both expanding early voting and keeping early voting locations open on nights and weekends.

<sup>2</sup> Battleground states: GA, TX, AZ, FL, WI, PA, MI, NC, OH, and NV

### Additional pro-voter policies win majority support.

- **64% support / 28% oppose** allowing voters to cast their ballot at any polling place in their county.
- **60% support / 29% oppose** making Election Day a holiday in their state.
- **59% support / 25% oppose** restoring the right to vote for eligible Americans who have completed their prison sentence.

**While restrictive policies meet stiff resistance, existing but little-known election integrity measures that many states already employ prompt an enthusiastic reaction.** In recent weeks, a flurry of legislative proposals have been introduced in numerous states aiming to restrict access to absentee voting, limit voter registration, and impose onerous requirements on eligible voters. Voters reject such efforts—but they do demonstrate high levels of support for *existing* measures which many states already employ to help ensure the integrity of elections. As importantly, the data suggests that voters are largely unaware of the measures their states already take to protect the integrity of the vote, with awareness lagging far behind actual adoption of the policies.

- **90% support / 5% oppose** allowing poll watchers from both parties to observe the vote counting process, but just **45% believe** their state currently allows the practice.
- **90% support / 5% oppose** conducting election audits to ensure voting machines worked properly and votes were counted accurately, but just **32% believe** their state currently conducts such audits.
- **88% support / 7% oppose** a process of signature verification of absentee ballots, but just **47% believe** their state currently verifies signatures on absentee ballots.
- **83% support / 10% oppose** an electronic ballot tracking system for absentee ballots, but just **43% believe** their state currently utilizes a ballot tracking system.
- **82% support / 7% oppose** allowing the public to watch the vote counting process online, but just **18% believe** their state currently allows this. Across battleground states, just 15% of voters believe their state allows the public to watch the vote counting process online.

