

## Ballot Harvesting according to our competition

In general, the Democrats rely on data showing which voters requested absentee ballots but have not turned them in. They then go door-to-door and offer to collect and turn in those ballots for the voters — often dozens or hundreds at a time. Some place ballot-collection boxes in high-concentration voter areas, such as college campuses, and then take the ballots to election offices when the boxes are full.

In **North Carolina**, election officials were investigating whether political operatives in parts of the 9th Congressional District harvested ballots from minority voters and didn't deliver them to the election offices. In some instances, they were accused of harvesting ballots that were not sealed and only partially filled out. Ballot harvesting is illegal under state law, which allows only a family member or legal guardian to drop off absentee ballots for a voter.

Investigators are focusing on areas in the district where an unusually high number of absentee ballots were not returned. They want to know whether some ballots were not turned in as promised to the local election offices, or were unsealed or only partially filled out.

Supporters (**Democrats**) of ballot harvesting say they worry that detractors may give an important campaign tool an unnecessary black eye. These supporters see their mission as helping voters who are busy with work or caring for children, and empowering those who are sick, elderly and poor. **Democrats cite that collecting ballots to turn in at a centralized voting hub has been an important tool for decades on expansive and remote Native American reservations.** Convenient arguments by these supporters are that sometimes we think of voting as this really straightforward process and we often forget that many voters, especially new voters in particular become confused when voting; about when they actually have to vote by; where they have to take their ballot to.

Several states have tried to limit ballot harvesting by restricting who can turn in another person's ballot. In **Arizona**, a video that showed a volunteer dropping off hundreds of ballots at a polling place prompted a debate that led to an anti-ballot harvesting law in 2016. "I think at any level, Republican, Democrat or anything, it's wrong. It's a terrible practice", said former Arizona Republican Party chairman Robert Graham, who backed the law. **"People should be responsible for their own votes."**

**Montana was the latest state to pass an anti-ballot harvesting law** when voters approved a referendum. Al Olszewski, a Republican state senator, said he proposed the ban after two of his constituents in northwestern Montana complained of pushy ballot collectors coming to their homes.

**California went in the opposite direction when it passed a law in 2016 to allow ballot harvesting.**

California's situation underscored that ballot harvesting is an important tool for political parties. Orange County Republican Party Chairman Fred Whitaker wrote in a newsletter that **"Republicans must develop a response to this law in order to remain competitive in elections."**

Even Olszewski, the sponsor of Montana's anti-ballot harvesting measure, acknowledges that such laws are unlikely to eliminate ballot harvesting completely. Such **"micro-targeting"** of voters when used with

technology to identify individuals' political leanings has become too important and effective in get-out-the-vote efforts, he said. **"I think that the Democrats figured it out** and were far more successful in the 2018 election, than the Republicans ever were. "The Republicans need to learn how to do this (harvesting ballots) as good or better than the Democrats".

A minor change in California's election laws may have had a major effect on last month's 2018 midterm elections that saw Democrats steamroll their Republican rivals and claim all but seven of the Golden State's 53 House seats.

Despite holding substantial leads on Election Day, many Republican candidates in California saw their advantage shrink, and then disappear, as late-arriving **Democratic votes were counted in the weeks following the election**. While no hard evidence is available, many observers point to the Democrats use of "ballot harvesting" as a key to their success in the elections.

In Orange County – once seen as a Republican stronghold in the state– every House seat went to a Democrat after an unprecedented 250,000 vote-by-mail drop-offs were counted; the San Francisco Chronicle reported that people were carrying in stacks of 100 and 200 of them.

**Law AB1921** legalized the so-called practice of "ballot harvesting." Previously, only a family member or someone living in the same household was permitted to drop off mail ballots for a voter, but the new law allowed anyone – including political operatives – to collect and return them for a voter.

**Democrats in the state argued that the bill, which was passed on a party line vote, was meant to make it easier for people to vote!**

In 2018, Republicans noted that "we were only down 26 seats (nationally) the night of the election and three weeks later, we lost basically every California race. Point being, when you have candidates that win the absentee ballot vote, win the day of the vote, and then **lose three weeks later** because of **Provisionals**, that's really bizarre."

Many of the Democrat field plans included [ballot harvesting] as an important option to deliver voters or their ballots to the polls.

In one anecdote, Democratic volunteers in Orange County visited a home four times to speak with the owner's 18-year-old daughter – a no preference voter – to see if she wanted them to pick up her ballot for her.

**The Democrats are creating new, highly efficient tools to turn out voters - if Republicans can't find a way to match it, they're going to lose more elections all over the country.**

