THE NEW NATIONAL ELECTION PRIORITY: ELIMINATE VOTING LINES

Voting lines are the single most visible problem in modern voting. *Slate*, in a review of Twitter "tweets" after the 2012 presidential election,[1] found that people waited because they *wanted* to vote. For those that did vote, the long lines experienced across the country did not obviate the frustration of those who waited, nor encourage those debating whether to vote.

In fact, long lines discourage voters already disgruntled about the value of their vote, the voting process or democracy in general. Even in 2012, America still only has an average of 60 percent eligible voters actually voting in presidential election years, and 40 percent in years where only state and local elections are held.[2] A relatively low voter turnout persists despite growth from 2000 of 105,417,475 voters to 129,132,140 in 2012.[3]

If the numbers grow as they should under the Help America Vote Act, the result will be even longer lines than the ones that dominated the election news in November 2012. The bottom line: no matter what improved registration and election day measures are put in place, long wait times will likely remain an obstacle in improved perceptions of the voting experience.

Wait Times

Voters in Florida experienced some of the longest wait times, with Election Day waits averaging an hour and a half.

Some of Florida's early voters encountered even worse conditions. In Miami-Dade County, the early voting queue problem was so severe that some polls closed. Some individuals reported waiting nine hours, others six,[4] due to long lines that could not be accommodated within official open-close times. *The waits threatened to disenfranchise willing voters*.

New York reported three-hour wait times on Election Day.[5] New Jersey voters, also under severe stress from SuperStorm Sandy, also suffered long lines at makeshift polling stations.[6]

TOP TEN REASONS WHY VOTING LINES SHOULD BE ELIMINATED

1. Long lines affect voter turnout; some people simply will not go to the polls because they do not want to wait.

2. Long lines have become a national problem; nearly every locality experiences them.

3. Long lines disenfranchise voters. In Florida, some polls were closed due to long lines and polling hours were not extended in most locations.

4. Long lines frustrate the purpose of the Help America Vote Act.

5. Long lines can outweigh or neutralize the sense of democratic participation, in which stress and "wasted time" in line leave states and voters considering other options for voting, which can complicate voting procedures, increase costs and require voting protocol revisions.

6. Long lines frustrate democracy, with media focusing as much on long lines as it does on candidates and issues.

7. Long lines demean the citizenry's view of government, reflecting "poor government," while also frustrating a "good" voting experience.

8. A reference to fixing long lines was included in the President's 2012 acceptance speech, a shout-out priority to states to eliminate long lines.

9. Long lines are a security risk – a soft target for a terrorist attack that would receive widespread notoriety on Election Day. American voters targeted would garner international attention, serving as a propaganda tool for terrorist recruitment, which could overwhelm election results news.

10. Long lines can be eliminated; new, patented technology can make lines disappear.