



*Election Integrity Project*<sup>®</sup>*California*  
EVERY LAWFULLY CAST VOTE ACCURATELY COUNTED

## **On Your Honor**

### **Part 7 of 7**

### **Ballot Chain of Custody**

Though there may be much more to say, this is our final article in a series designed to expose the vulnerable underbelly of California's over-lenient election process.

Parts 1-6 in this article series discussed California's on-your-honor policies of

- [lack of citizenship verification](#)
- [unmaintained voter rolls](#)
- [universal mailing of ballots](#)
- [ballots returned via ways that operate outside of public view](#)
- [ballot processing failing to filter out illegally cast ballots](#)
- [election day becoming election season](#)

**No discussion of election vulnerabilities would be complete without discussing ballot chain of custody.**

With the reality of a huge vote by mail system in California, the **chain of custody of EVERY ballot is crucial to a fair, honest and transparent election process.**

- Chain of custody means verifying and documenting every transfer of every ballot, ensuring they are never unsupervised or unprotected.
- Proper chain of custody ensures that from the time counties issue ballots to the time they tally the results, no one can steal, divert, alter, inject extra or discard ballots.

**In the vote-in-person model of voting, there is no break in the chain of custody:**

- Voters insert their ballots to a secured ballot box or through a scanner where results are stored.
- Poll workers under supervision of other poll workers and observers transfer those ballots or computer chips to a transport container, clearly labeled and tamper-evident sealed.
- That container is transported to the counting center with at least a two-person team to ensure there is no break in the chain of custody.

- At the counting center, the transport container is opened and the ballots (which are not in need of further processing or validation) are immediately counted with oversight of other election workers and citizen observers.

**Unfortunately, California's vote by mail system has NO chain of custody.**

- Counties send millions of blank ballots through the U.S. mail with no way to verify that the intended recipients actually receive them.
- Voters drop their voted ballots in U.S. mailboxes and unmonitored community drop boxes.
- USPS and ballot transport drivers move ballots from mailboxes and drop boxes.
  - If drivers mishandle, discard or fail to deliver ballots there will be no way to know, because counties do not know how many ballots these individuals retrieved.
- The State no longer requires voters at vote centers to surrender the ballot they received in the mail and render it invalid.
  - In 2020, EIPCa observers documented election workers telling voters to throw their VBM envelopes and ballots into trash cans without invalidating them by tearing or voiding markings.

**This creates the possibility that unscrupulous individuals will retrieve untold numbers of them from the trash and vote them.**

Lax signature verification regulations ensure the strong likelihood that those retrieved ballots will be accepted and tabulated without question.

In addition, **in 2016, California legalized ballot harvesting**, meaning **ANYONE** can now turn in an unlimited number of ballots without any established requirements to verify that harvesters obtained those ballots legally or did nothing to alter them.

**Ballot harvesting creates numerous opportunities for election manipulation**, all made possible by the elimination of chain of custody. Most states prohibit or restrict ballot harvesting and many states consider it a felony.

**And yet, despite the obvious and widely-acknowledged threat to election integrity, ballot harvesting is welcomed and encouraged in California.**

- At polling locations, citizens may observe interactions between voters and election workers but not between voters and ballot harvesters.
- Harvesters operate in any number of places, such as private homes, dormitories, nursing homes, and homeless shelters.
  - Thus, they can coerce or wrongly influence voters without anyone knowing.

- In states that allow ballot harvesting, citizens have observed cash payments for votes and harvesters preying upon and deceiving vulnerable populations such as the elderly.
- **If a harvester decides to discard a ballot, there would be no way to discover it unless a voter checks whether the county received it.**

In a multitude of ways, California's legislature, ostensibly in the name of "access" and "inclusion," has **created a porous election system that can be easily manipulated.**

The complete disregard for verifiable ballot chain of custody may be the most significant of all the failings.

### **California's current electoral system is a betrayal of California citizens.**

California must move away from an on-your-honor system to one based on verifiable integrity.

**In the meantime, California voters can make informed choices that increase the chances of their own voice being accurately heard.**

**California voters still have the option to vote in a way that virtually guarantees their ballot is counted**

- **on the same day**
- **as they cast it**
- **with unbroken chain of custody.**

That option is **to vote in person** (without an envelope) on or as close as possible to Election Day at a polling location.

Doing so removes the vulnerability and opportunities for manipulation provided by the highly touted vote by mail system. The more voters who make that choice, the fewer ballots there will be to manipulate or fall through the cracks.

**We can and will restore integrity to the process and return faith, hope and trust to every legitimate voter in the Golden State.**

Voters in growing numbers making wise choices in the way they submit their ballots will lead the way.

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