

**Testimony of the Hon. Bill Gardner**  
**Senate Judiciary Committee, April 20, 2021**

To the Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Bill Gardner and since 1976, I have had the privilege to serve as the New Hampshire Secretary of State and its Chief Election Official. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today about a critically important issue that impacts all of us: the integrity of our elections is the foundation of our democracy.

I support efforts of individual states to improve their own elections. The states have long been great testing grounds for innovation in enhancing and protecting the most fundamental right of citizens in this country. The right to vote.

With that said, I am deeply troubled and concerned about the direction some in Congress would take the states in terms of the conduct of elections. An unjustified federal intrusion into the election processes of the individual states will damage voter confidence, diminish the importance of Election Day, and ultimately result in lower voter turnout. We only need to look at the history of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, also known as “Motor Voter,” to see that federal involvement in the election process does not render the promised results.

When the NVRA was enacted by Congress, it was believed that many more United States citizens would be able to vote. Millions of dollars were spent by the states to comply with the act. It completely changed the voter registration process in the states.

In contrast, New Hampshire maintained an exemption to the NVRA due to Election Day voter registration, and saw its voter turnout of voting age population surge to the top tier of voter turnout among the states and has consistently maintained its position in the top 3 states for the past 4 presidential elections. Since the year 2000, New Hampshire has been double digit percentage points higher than the national average using voting age population. The attached voter turnout charts illustrate these trends.

In a “one-size-fits-all” federal approach, legislation known as the “For the People Act” would trample New Hampshire’s state constitution which requires all votes be received, counted and the results publicly announced on the day of the election, and permits absentee ballots to be used only by voters who will be absent on election day or who have a disability preventing the voter from attending the polling place. The election process in New Hampshire is relatively simple. The massive federal legislation contemplated by Congress will overcomplicate our election system at tremendous financial cost. It would negate traditions and procedures that have served New Hampshire voters well for over 200 years. I believe the charts that I have provided based on facts are self-explanatory. I would be happy to answer any questions to explain why I do not believe this legislation is necessary, and why I believe it will hurt voter participation especially in the State of New Hampshire.