

**Testimony of Michael Waldman
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**Spotlight Forum on “Protecting Democracy: Defending the Right to Vote”
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Over the past two years, we have seen an extraordinary new threat to American elections: the federal government itself. As we all know, the Trump administration has waged a concerted campaign to undermine the vote. This is unprecedented, and outrageous.

I can report today: President Trump’s efforts are failing. For every move there has been a countermove. A broad effort has mobilized to oppose this power grab. Dozens of courts have declared this effort unlawful. It is increasingly clear that in 2026 citizens will be able to vote with confidence.

Benjamin Franklin once wrote, “Never trouble trouble until trouble troubles you.” That’s not quite our approach at the Brennan Center. We worry. (Dr. Franklin also advised, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”).

What are we particularly concerned about as we look toward November? Let me mention three things.

We were, of course, alarmed that the Supreme Court might allow President Trump’s executive order to sharply curb mail balloting. Millions could have been disenfranchised. Fortunately, two weeks ago, the Court blocked Trump’s move. The Brennan Center was proud to be part of the legal team representing voters in that case.

Voter confusion now perhaps poses the biggest risk. With all the news and noise, citizens cannot be expected to follow executive edicts and ping-ponging court rulings in minute detail. People ask, “Can I still vote by mail?” “Will I need to show a passport or birth certificate to register?” “If I changed my name because I got married, will it be harder to vote?”

* The Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law is a nonpartisan law and policy institute that works to strengthen the systems of democracy and justice so they work for all. This statement does not purport to convey the views, if any, of New York University School of Law. Michael Waldman is the author of *The Fight to Vote*, *The Supermajority*, and seven other books. He has led the Brennan Center since 2005.

In fact, for nearly all voters, very little has actually changed. Congress and courts blocked Trump's worst ideas. Congress rejected the SAVE Act. As a general matter, citizens can cast ballots as before.

Our final chief worry is the threat of foreign interference. Iran, Russia, or others could try to meddle with disinformation campaigns or efforts to compromise election systems. The federal government's withdrawal of support increases the risk. Fortunately, state and county election officials have stepped up their readiness to protect against cyberattacks. Whatever might happen, it will be virtually impossible for malevolent actors to change results. Nearly all citizens now use voter-verified paper ballots, which makes recounts and audits possible.

Of course, other areas of concern remain. The administration continues to say it can send ICE or armed federal officers to the polls. That is illegal under federal and state laws, and we recently sued to ensure voters do not face intimidation. Certification could be challenged. But there are strong state laws in place to ensure the rightful winners are certified. In each instance, private citizens and public officials are working to protect the American people. We have your backs.

Our message to voters is this: You can vote with confidence. Make a plan. Vote early. Vote early in person. Vote by a drop box. Vote by the Postal Service. Vote on Election Day. However you do so, cast your ballot. Make your voice heard.

Members of this Committee have a great role to play, as well. You can use your bully pulpits to rebut rumors and convey confidence. You can work with election officials and law enforcement to ensure they have all the help they need. And if you have the chance, you can pass vital reforms to make sure this never happens again. New laws to protect the freedom to vote. To ban gerrymandering. To address corruption and enact Supreme Court term limits. You can make this time of turmoil the beginning of a season of renewal.

Donald Trump's efforts to undermine the election are failing. They will only succeed if voters stay home.