

Voter Protection Shadow Hearing

Committee on House Administration

Monday, September 14, 2026 | Chester, Pennsylvania

Oral Statement of Omar H. Nouredin

Thank you, Ranking Member Morelle. Thank you, Representative Scanlon, for hosting us in your district. And thank you to Widener University.

My name is Omar Nouredin. I am the Senior Vice President of Policy and Litigation at Common Cause. We are a nonpartisan grassroots organization with nearly one million members in every congressional district in the country, including more than 41,000 here in Pennsylvania.

Our mission is to uphold the values of American democracy. We work to create open, honest, and accountable government that serves the public interest. We work to promote equal rights, opportunity, and representation for all. And we work to empower all people to make their voices heard in the political process.

My fellow witnesses know this state better than anyone. My job today is to describe what we see nationally, and where Pennsylvania fits.

The 2026 midterms have started. Ballots are printed. States are handing them to the Postal Service. And this administration is injecting chaos into the process. The President and his allies are trying to frighten voters in key cities and states, to make voting by mail unworkable, and to lay the groundwork to disrupt ballot counting and certification. Our Election Protection program and our litigation team will meet each of these efforts. Voters will have their say. But we need your help, and the help of every American who believes in the freedom to vote.

Federal agents at the polls

For months, the President and his allies have talked openly about sending troops and ICE agents to polling places. The goal is fear and confusion. We saw a preview in the primaries. In Syracuse, armed ICE agents walked into a polling place to confront an election worker over an Instagram post. In another community, ICE made an arrest in an elementary school parking lot that doubled as a polling site. In Florida, our poll monitors found a checkpoint and an armed guard outside a

voting location, run by a sheriff's office that has signed up to enforce immigration law alongside ICE. Then, two weeks ago, Secretary Mullin made it official. He announced that ICE will be at polling places this November for what he called targeted enforcement.

The message is clear. This plan is meant to intimidate voters. It will not work, because we are prepared.

Last week, Common Cause filed a first-of-its-kind lawsuit challenging that announcement. We believe it violates the federal law that bars armed personnel from polling places.

The intimidation does not stop at the polls. It reaches the people who protect them. Common Cause trains volunteers to observe immigration enforcement, document what they see, and help their neighbors understand their rights. Those volunteers are now being watched. In Minnesota, federal agents infiltrated church meetings, followed people to their homes and workplaces, and built dossiers on people who had committed no crime. So last week we filed a second first-of-its-kind lawsuit. We believe the government is retaliating against our members and volunteers for exercising their First Amendment rights, and we have asked the court to stop it.

Two first-of-their-kind lawsuits in one week. If you are wondering about the bags under my eyes, that is where they came from. I am told they are also first of their kind.

Lawsuits are only part of the answer. The other part is people. Common Cause co-leads the national Election Protection coalition, the country's largest nonpartisan voter protection program, with more than 300 partner organizations and the 866-OUR-VOTE hotline. Two of our closest partners are at this table: the League of Women Voters and the Committee of Seventy. Together we recruit poll monitors from the communities most likely to be targeted, and we train them on four things. What a federal officer may and may not do at a polling place. How to document an incident. How to reach a lawyer and an election official within minutes. And how to calm a situation rather than inflame it. We also work with immigrant rights groups so voters in immigrant communities have support when they need it.

Sabotage of vote by mail

The second threat targets voting by mail. Mail voting is safe and secure. It is a lifeline for seniors, veterans, rural voters, and voters with disabilities. This administration wants to decide who gets to use it.

On March 31, the President signed an executive order that attempts to federalize our elections and turn the Postal Service against voters. Last month, under White House pressure, the Postal Service issued a rule carrying out that order, even though a court had blocked it. The rule would give the Postal Service new authority to refuse to deliver voters' ballots. This week we learned from a whistleblower that the system was designed so poorly, and so fast, that it is almost certain to disenfranchise thousands of eligible voters.

Days after the rule came out, Common Cause filed suit in federal court, asking the court to strike down the President's executive order and the Postal Service rule. In a parallel case brought by our allies, including the League of Women Voters, in Massachusetts, a federal judge found both unlawful and blocked them for now. The administration has appealed to the Supreme Court, so this is not over.

While the courts work, we are doing two things. First, we are calming the alarm these actions created. Our message to voters is simple. Whatever happens in court, check your address. Mail your ballot early. Track it. And if you have questions, call your county election office or 866-OUR-VOTE and ask about voting in person before or on Election Day.

Second, we are building contingency plans in case the administration succeeds. Here in Pennsylvania, counties decide whether to offer drop boxes and satellite offices. On September 4, Common Cause's Pennsylvania team testified before the Allegheny County Board of Elections and asked for more options for voters. The board voted to add three drop boxes. We need more counties to follow.

What Congress can do

Three requests. First, keep holding hearings like this one. Put these actions on the record and in public view. Second, hold the Postal Service accountable. Use your oversight power to find out how the White House pressured the agency and how any ballot screening system would work.

Third, reach across the aisle. Sabotaging vote-by-mail hurts Republicans and Democrats alike. Nearly ninety percent of Utah voters cast ballots by mail. One in three in Florida and Nebraska. One in four in Idaho, Ohio, and the Dakotas. It hurts rural voters, veterans, and older voters everywhere. State election directors know last-minute postal changes are a terrible idea. Members of Congress, governors, and secretaries of state from both parties should be saying so together.

Closing

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and thank you to my colleagues on this panel. Together we have stopped mass voter challenges, made sure voters could cure their ballots, and handled everything from bomb threats to the attacks I described today. Outcomes are not inevitable. Voters will decide this election, and we will make sure of it. I look forward to your questions.