

August 3, 2022

Dear Senate Judiciary Committee,

I have been an election worker and official for more than 30 years, beginning my career in Las Cruces, New Mexico in 1991. I began as a voting machine tech, excited to take on the great challenge of getting up to speed on the electronic aspects of voting. I loved doing the work and learning about these systems. I moved to Clark County in Nevada to continue my work as a voting machine tech in 1995 working my way up to my current position as registrar of voters.

I caught the election bug early and have stuck with it. One of the biggest reasons that I've dedicated my professional career to election work is the great feeling of satisfaction at the end of an election cycle. There are so many things out of your control that you have to coordinate, from working with poll workers to coordinating so many polling places to interfacing with voters themselves. That was what has always given me the most satisfaction -- when an election was over and we knew we'd put it on successfully.

But today the aspects out of my control are no longer exciting logistical or technological challenges -- they are questions of safety for myself and my staff. The threats and intimidation can be traced back to the 2020 general election. On top of the massive changes necessary during the pandemic, we were adjusting to new legislative requirements, implementing new processes like same day registration to make it easier for people to register to vote and take part in the process. Our team rose to the challenge. We even made it easier for the general public to come in and observe. We had to change our whole layout to make that possible. We reconstructed the warehouse and put in glass panels throughout our entire counting board allowing people to sit and watch. We hired a temporary workforce, called ambassadors, who had information to explain the process as it occurs to the folks who are observing.

Despite this effort, the public response that my staff and I encountered was something we'd never experienced. Many of the people we saw on a daily basis were, for example, putting in ridiculous reports to the Secretary of State that we had to review and respond to. Some people were putting in 3-4 reports a day and a large group was putting them in every day. They would also put in public information requests -- I've never had to deal with them the way I do now, and it takes up a large portion of my time and staff to put that together. Even worse, we began to have a large number of people show up in person to our canvasses, our polling places, and our offices, often armed. We were getting inappropriate phone calls and emails, saying that we should be in jail, calling us criminals, telling us that we're defeating democracy. These callers said that they knew where we live and accused us of carrying on elections without integrity. None of that was true. In fact, despite the criticism and new processes, we held a successful election with a high level of integrity,

In one scenario, people were following some of my team leaders from the polling sites during early voting. They had each been assigned an early voting site -- and as each of the leaders left, they would be followed from their polling place to the election center. Even once the team leaders processed and brought in the cartridges and ballots, those same people would hang

around. Some of my team were concerned they would be followed out and to their homes. We talked to these people and tried to understand their concerns. We didn't get good answers other than to say that they knew we were doing something illegal. We detailed to them exactly what the process was for handling drop off boxes and so forth. But it didn't matter what explanation we had.

We've learned to be transparent and to make everything available to the public. It sounds like it makes sense, but then you end up with folks who are using everything they can against you. It makes you uncomfortable about what you do in public. To the irrational who try to taint everything we do, that's an effective tool for them to use. It's smearing our department.

We need more staff that are properly trained to interact with the public and be full time ambassadors who can answer these questions. We can't rely on temporary staff -- we have to be concerned about internal staff, folks who have been hired and act like normal workers but are gathering information to try and identify something they can use to perhaps sue us. They haven't been able to do so because our processes are solid, but we need more people. The temporary fix is not working. After two or three days some new hires simply get overwhelmed with the level of contention.

Some solutions are immediately apparent. We need help, especially funding, from the federal government to provide security, for example. We need a security guard at election time and we don't have the funding for that. In 2020 we learned that we needed police officers on site for our mail ballot processing observation. Just their presence changes the demeanor of observers. It's a bit more orderly, but it's expensive. We have to pay for police staff, and they come in on overtime shifts. We had up to 6 officers monitoring the process because the warehouse is so large. While these steps have been critical to keeping election workers in Clark County safe, there are additional steps that election officials and law enforcement can take to help provide long-term solutions to this problem. I am proud to be a member of the Committee for Safe and Secure Elections, which brings these two communities together and aims to support commonsense policies and practices that protect election workers and voters from violence, threats, and intimidation.

And beyond security, we need the funding to properly pay our temporary staff. We shouldn't be losing battles with McDonalds because they're paying better than we are and paying benefits.

And we need legislation that helps us to hold observers who illegally take pictures, record things, and so on accountable. We regularly had to ask people to leave -- to stop taking pictures and making recordings because state law prohibits that. After the election some people made legal claims using recordings of things they'd obtained illegally. They've been unsuccessful because, of course, our processes follow the law, but it's hard to deal with every day. When we know there are people who are not following the law, we need the DA and AG to be able to go after them and have a fine or some kind of preventative consequence.

Sometimes we're working until 2 in the morning and come back to work at 6. That's the life of an election official. Election officials don't lack dedication to our work -- but we can't recruit talented people and keep them on if those people will be harrassed, followed, and threatened. I urge you to do anything you can to help uphold the integrity of our process.

Sincerely,

Joe P. Gloria, MPA, CERA  
Registrar of Voters