Problems Occurred In Voting

Within the first few months of 2020, many problematic events have occurred. More some relevant than others, such as the global pandemic and the high number of unemployed people during said pandemic. The pandemic is causing many issues society is not used to facing and we are being forced to overcome these obstacles in the most progressive way possible. Social distancing is starting to become the social normality, and will most likely continue in 2020 so COVID-19 does not resurface as time continues, which is a large fear many civilians, as well as the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has. With the 2020 Presidential Election coming up in September, it has the potential to cause issues for social distancing as well as getting people to leave their house to go out and actually vote. With this virus being so easily transmittable from person to person, the pandemic could skew the voting results with so many people being afraid to go vote in person. The United States government needs to find an effective way for people to vote safely as well as make it simple and fast, to not discourage people from voting in such an important Presidential election.

Such an important decision as voting for the next President of the United States needs to be handled properly by the government and have enough marginal room for error from the civilians. The government needs to begin addressing any issue they could face with alternative voting methods. The government has no rights to give unequal opportunity for citizens to vote, according to the 14th amendment of the Constitution, Section 2, “Representatives shall be apportioned among the several states according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each state, excluding Indians not taxed. But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice President of the United States, Representatives in Congress, the executive and judicial officers of a state, or the members of the legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such state, being twenty-one years of age, and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion, or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such state.” (Cornell, pg 1). If the United States government is running properly, they would create such a system that allows voters the equal opportunity to vote from the safety of their house (absentee voting), or at a voting station if they wish to do so. At the voting stations, they would have to still enforce social distancing regulations that have already been set by the state and national government.

The first, most obvious, solution to this issue with voting would be to have every state do absentee ballot voting, through the Unite States Postal Service (USPS). This idea would effectively mail each person registered to vote a ballot they fill out, and mail back to get sorted and counted. This has been what the state of Ohio has tried out within the past few weeks, and there is mixed feedback on how effective it was. Many officials claim it is a proper way to keep people healthy while still giving them the right to vote, but many who tested the system were not very pleased. For example, according to the article “Biden wins Ohio’s closely watched mail-in primary”, “Lynne Marshall, of Sylvania, opened her mailbox Tuesday and was disappointed to see that her ballot had not arrived. She then agonized over whether to cast a vote in person at the election board and put her health at risk or stay home and skip an election for the first time she can remember. “What should I do?” she asked. “I’m just really disgusted with it all. Of

course, I'll feel guilty if I don't vote." LaRose said that after he raised concerns last week, the Postal Service relocated a sorting facility into Ohio, searched meticulously for all in-transit election mail and deployed top-level executives to sites to oversee the effort." This shows how a mail in system in place for everyone is not as effective as the government hoped so. The article did not mention if the search team they employed to find the lost ballots were successful or not. The basic idea of this solution is proper handling, but in reality, it is not. Those who thought of this did not take into effect those who might not have a proper address, voting fraud, those who are registered to vote but have controlling parents that might force them to vote for a party the voter does not want, or how common it is for the USPS to lose mail on a daily basic.

A solution to this problem that is being faced is to give registered voters the option to do an absentee ballot, but require voters to certify they're sick or unable to vote for any other reason (such as disabled or elderly). With an option for an absentee ballot, those who choose this option can mail their ballot in, or drop it off at a secure location specifically made for this cause. These options would make it easier for voters to get to decide themselves which method they prefer to cast their vote as well as ensures the safety of other. For the actual voting stations, according to the article "How to protect elections amid the coronavirus pandemic", a paper ballot is the most effective way to prevent spreading illnesses among people. It prevents people from having to wipe down touch screens after each use and also prevents hardware problems or hackers getting into the system. A full paper voting system also allows for a recount if necessary. Effective paper ballots would also ensure no issues would arise if needed, such as the Bush vs Gore recount in 2000.

An objection if the government does not feel as if there are any viable solutions for absentee voting or safe ways to have people vote, is to simply push back the day of Presidential election until is it confirmed that it is safe for the general public to go out freely without restrictions. This solution would make it possible to make sure each person has the right to vote any way they chose, and does not put losing ballots at risk, as it would with the mail-in system. This reasoning is flawed because according to the article, "Voting During a Pandemic", "the Presidential Election Day Act, passed in 1845, sets Election Day as 'the Tuesday next after the first Monday in the month of November.' Therefore, postponing election day would require Congress to pass legislation that would be signed by the president and upheld in the courts." If the election were to get postponed, the flexibility of the actual length of the delay is limited by the Constitution. In the Constitution, under the 20th Amendment, it states: 'The terms of the President and the Vice President shall end at noon on the 20th day of January… of the years in which such terms would have ended if this article had not been ratified; and the terms of their successors shall then begin.' This also would raise questions for other elections happening, not just the presidential. There are a few states that have statutes that allow an election to be postponed during an emergency, giving unilateral power for choices up to the current governor. Not every state has emergency contingency plans, such as Pennsylvania or Ohio.

The recent pandemic has caused a lot of stir with unanswered questions regarding numerous topics. There is still no determining factor on what will happen in the next upcoming months when it comes to voting, how people will vote. The current pandemic does allow the government to prepare for the future if anything of this capacity were to happen again. If the government handles it properly and effectively, there should not be too many issues when it comes to the Presidential election in a few months. Hopefully the solutions they end up going with ensures more voters will actually cast a ballot.

1. https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/amendmentxiv
2. https://theconversation.com/how-to-protect-elections-amid-the-coronavirus-pandemic-134761
3. https://www.ecowatch.com/voting-coronavirus-pandemic-2645666340.html?rebelltitem=1#rebelltitem1
4. https://www.marketwatch.com/story/ohios-mail-in-primary-closely-watched-as-test-subject-for-voting-during-pandemic-2020-04-28?siteid=yhoof2&yptr=yahoo