

OPINION

Voting by mail works in Oregon. It will work in Michigan, too.

By Bill Bradbury and Tim Palmer

Voting by mail works. We know. We've been doing it in [Oregon for 20 years](#).

As Michigan's Secretary of State endeavors to make it easier for Michigan voters to apply for absentee ballots and ensure safe voting in August and November, let us tell you why we vote entirely by mail.

[More people get to vote](#). Data proves this in Oregon, Colorado and elsewhere.

This makes voting more democratic, addressing a fundamental American value, enshrined in the Constitution.

It's safer. No exposure to COVID-19, or even the common cold.

It's easier, especially for the elderly. No one leaves home. None of us have to skip work, find a baby sitter, or cram another commitment into the day. There's no need to drive or catch a bus to the polls.

Voting by mail saves time and, most important here: no lines, which have become a travesty of democracy. People have recently waited in line at [polling places six hours](#). Lines require us to stand in rain, snow, cold or heat. Voting by mail saves money.

Personally it costs nothing; even postage is covered. And it's cheaper for our local, county, and state governments. In Oregon [it costs a third less than operating polling places did](#).

No need for polling place staffs, and shortages of staff are why Milwaukee went from [180 polling places to 5 in the last election](#); as a result, a lot of people didn't get to vote. Senior volunteers fill a lot of these jobs, and they shouldn't be congregating.

Along that line, voting by mail requires no voting machines. You don't have to buy machines, rent them, set them up, store them, replace them, maintain them and check their accuracy. Voting on a paper ballot with a ballpoint pen intimidates none of us, unlike the array of buttons we confront behind the voting-booth curtain.

Voting by mail means no stressed rush, unlike when you step into that voting booth with a crowd impatiently waiting in line behind you. At home you can be deliberate. You can pause and look-up information about a candidate.

Voting by mail is popular; a Wall Street Journal/NBC poll recently showed that [nearly two-thirds of Americans support it](#). Support in Oregon is overwhelming.

Here in Oregon, through two decades of voting by mail, [fraud has been extremely rare](#) and never significant. For example, a man who innocently signed his wife's ballot with her permission was caught through a nearly foolproof signature verification process and her vote disqualified.

Voting by mail [leaves a paper trail](#) — a critical feature for exposing fraud or machine malfunction/hacking and one that few voting machines provide. If fraud happens to be your concern, then vote by mail.

[Voting by mail is nonpartisan](#). Making voting easier, cheaper, and safer is good no matter what your affiliation. Studies show no benefit to one side or the other.

With no evidence whatsoever, [President Trump](#) last month said, "Mail ballots, they cheat. Mail ballots are very dangerous for this country because of cheaters." We take offense at that. It's false. It's illogical. It's wrong. He's making it up. We know, because, like we said, we've been voting by mail for 20 years. The President doesn't want to allow people to vote by mail, but he did it in 2008 and 2020. Now he has taken aim at Michigan's rights and abilities to vote by mail. During his visit to Michigan on Thursday, he repeated a threat to withhold funding from Michigan if it mails out absentee ballot applications.

A [bill in the U.S. Senate](#) would give everyone the choice to vote by mail while preserving states' power to make their own decisions about voting procedures. You might check to see if your senators support this measure. That would tell you a lot about whether or not they want more people to vote.

If some people still want to go to polling places, keep that option. But also make it easy to vote by mail. Our democracy depends on it. We need to make voting safer, faster, cheaper, fairer, better.

Listen: in Oregon we love voting by mail. People in Michigan will love it, too.

This is America. Everyone who's eligible to vote should be allowed and encouraged to do it.

Bill Bradbury is the former Oregon Secretary of State. His job was to oversee elections during the state's first 10 years of vote-by-mail. Tim Palmer is the author of books and opinion columns about Oregon.

A version of this column originally ran in the [Madison Capital Times](#).

<http://freep.com/story/opinion/contributors/2020/05/22/vote-mail-works-oregon-work-michigan-too/5238117002>