

Is Voter Suppression Actually Lawful?

by Kara Tucker (2-9-2020)

When we hear the term “voter suppression,” I think some of us shift uncomfortably in our seats as we think back to the shameful Jim Crow laws of the South. Perhaps we are thinking of laws that were blatant and deliberate in the suppression of black voters. Maybe we are thinking about the burden put on citizens who cannot afford to take time off from work during the hours of which voting polls are open or the fact that many people who have been purged from the voting list are unaware that they have been purged until they show up to vote.

What if it's more? What if the biggest threat to democracy in the United States is something that is written right into our Constitution? The Electoral College, while created in good faith, has legally suppressed the votes of many marginalized groups. This was demonstrated very clearly in the 2016 presidential election.

When a candidate can lose the popular vote by almost three million votes and still win an election, we cannot deny the silencing of millions of voices. When women, people of color, and other marginalized groups are not being represented by the Electoral College at an appropriate rate, we cannot call it anything other than voter suppression. Although no state is tied indefinitely to a political party, we can typically predict which way a state will vote based on history and polls. Swing states tend to have the most voting power which represents such a small fraction of citizens. Author Andrew Gelman wrote an article for Vox, an online news source, that explained how 2016 campaigns were directed at the swing states which were 80% white. This is not representative of America!

The Electoral College was created at a time where nobody thought our country would be split into only two political parties. If we were narrowing down several candidates from several different parties, perhaps an Electoral College would be warranted. However, this is not our

reality. The reality is that the Electoral College systematically silences the voices of people who are not adequately represented in positions of power. Democracy is a cornerstone of America; it is what The Founding Fathers built our nation on. If there is a system within our government that is not functioning in a way that upholds democracy, it is our duty as Americans to correct it expeditiously. Voting is the responsibility of the people; ensuring that these votes count is the responsibility of our government.