

Secure Vote Utah

Utah County Public Meeting – Tuesday, January 4, 2022

Location: Lehi

Natalie Clawson, initiative sponsor: Welcome to the public meeting for the Secure Vote Utah, voting initiative act. We are here in Lehi. My name is Natalie Clawson and I am one of the sponsors of the initiative.

Natalie: “The Secure the Vote Act of 2022 is an initiative of the people that returns most voting to election day, in-person at local precincts; instructs precinct election judges to count all ballots they receive throughout election day and publicly release the results; returns to the absentee ballot system that permits limited mail-in voting for cause; creates emergency ballots for those with unforeseen events that would prevent in-person voting; requires Utah-issued photo identification to register, request a ballot before election day, and to vote in person; requires a statewide sequential numbering system and uniform paper for all ballots; authorizes sample audits to verify election results; and amends related code sections to implement the Act.”

Natalie: That is a summary of what we are doing with this initiative. Do we have any questions?

Melanie Monestere, Summit County: traveled from Summit County to find out more about initiative. I want to know about how we can be involved and how is this campaign being funded.

Natalie: great question. We need people to sign our initiative. We need signatures before February 15th from across the state. People can donate to the initiative on our webpage securevoteutah.org. Each packet gets turned into the country clerk for verification. Josh, what happens if you receive a packet with a signature of someone from outside of your county?

Josh Daniels, Utah County Clerk/Auditor ... each county can only register voters from their own counties. If we receive registration forms from other counties, we put them in an envelope and send them to the right county.

Stephanie Grant, initiative sponsor: What would get our signatures rejected?

Josh ... With a statewide initiative, not registered. Signature not matching. Duplicates. Common problem: if one spouse signs for the other person. One person can fill out the information for multiple people, but each person needs to sign their own name. Make sure you are training your gatherers that each person needs to sign for themselves.

Many more voters are now registered to vote because Google and Facebook were pushing registration in the 2020 election.

Natalie Clawson: are those people voting?

Josh: The increase number of people who are registered did not track at the same rate as the number of people who voted in the 2020 election. The newly registered people are harder to find because many of them are college students and are moving to different locations. It is more difficult to find your registered voters now because they are more transient.

Melanie... do all signatures need to be done in person?

Josh ... California allows digital signatures

Natalie ... what is the best way for us to have people register to vote?

Josh Have them fill out a form. The online process is not very fast. If they have a Utah drivers license then they can register online because drivers license and signature is online. If they don't have a Utah's drivers license, have them fill out the form. You can have a QR form for them to scan or bring in registration forms.

Josh: How to get the right amount of signatures in every county, you should try a variety of methods to gather signatures including going door to door.

Natalie: how many signatures should we try to gather?

Josh: the people who sign your initiative are more likely to be registered voters than people who signed the cannabis initiative. We had to get 20% more with the cannabis initiative. You probably need 10% over.

Melanie: Is it legal to have people in the grocery store parking lot collecting signatures?

Josh: yes. Just follow private property rules.

Stephanie: would you sign this petition?

Josh: no, I don't think this is the way to fix this. There is a lot of innovation in our elections. The hand counting of ballots, etc, can bring a huge amount of human error. Not happy with how Heritage Foundation did their study about elections and the scorecard. They had to assert their own judgment call about what is more secure when scoring the states. They make the assumption that vote by mail is not secure.

Stephanie: do you think vote by mail is secure?

Josh: Every ballot has a unique number on it. There is a ballot ID on every envelope. I am not able to send a replacement until we invalidate the other ballots. It's the same if a signature doesn't match.

Stephanie: asking Josh about signature verification. People have become very lazy in writing their signatures on electronic keypads. Their signatures have evolved to single lines. How do you verify signatures and how is that more secure than showing voter ID? If you looked at my last 10 signatures at different locations you wouldn't be able to tell I was the same person.

Josh: theoretically you are right. There is a huge risk that a person would sign it. Number one... we don't count the signatures that don't match. You would be surprised how accurate we are with signature verification.

Natalie: Do you contact people if there is a problem with their signatures? What happens?

Josh: Yes, they have to send in an affidavit.

Natalie: Where do you get their signatures from?

Josh: From voter registration and from ballots.

Josh: How many people do you need to commit fraud to turn an election?

Natalie: Depends on if you centralize tabulating and have one person who controls all the machines.

Josh: You need a lot of people to forge signatures to create fraud. It is very hard to copy people's signatures. If someone was a large scale fraudster, they would have to forge a lot of signatures.

Melanie... does someone look at every ballot?

Josh... either machine detects it is the same signature or we have humans look at it.

Stephanie ... I picked up a package from Walgreens. I had to show Id to pick it up. Isn't it crazy you don't have to show ID to vote?

Josh ... you have to show ID to register to vote

Natalie ... if people can fill out forms to register to vote then when do they show their ID?

Josh ... when people give us their data, then they can come in and show their ID

Josh ... Utah is a universal mail-in state. Utah has been doing some version of this since 2010.

Melanie ... why was the change made to be all mail-in state?

Josh ... I don't know

Natalie ... when do people show Id when they are registering? How do we help people register when they are signing petitions?

Josh ... They fill out the form and the petition. Need to show ID to have registration count. We have good checks in place for who should and shouldn't be voted. Example of people who vote and then dies, or who received a ballot after they died and the widow fills it out. We check the signatures. These can be honest mistakes. We do more voter registration maintenance now with a vote by mail system to maintain good records than was done before. Post office will not forward ballots. We didn't go through the effort to remove dead voters when people were voting in person because we didn't worry about people coming in to vote in person when dead. But we do a lot of work now to update lists because we are sending out the ballots and we want the records to be accurate. If someone moves, they become inactive. We only send ballots to active registered voters.

Stephanie ... if you throw out a signature on the petition will be able to see it?

Josh... We cant give out image of signature, but we can tell you these were the valid names on the packet that were accepted.

Natalie ... would it be smart for us to photocopy the packets before we turn it in?

Josh ... yes. It is probably a wasted effort to undertake your own validation if you are under a short timeline. Focus on gathering signatures

Stephanie ... do you think Trump really lost?

Josh... yeah. Trump won Utah. In Utah, Cox got 5-10,000 vote difference in Utah County. They voted for Spencer Cox but not for Trump. This was an all-time high for difference between Republican votes for Governor and for President - the highest it has been in 20 years. The Republicans don't like Trump.

Stephanie ... the majority of people today don't trust machines. Even if people think it is secure, people don't have confidence in the machines.

Josh ... Trump demoted his campaign manager months before the election. His advisors told him he would lose. Not a smart move. His campaign manager told him that he would lose. Trump should have called Karl Rove. He needed better strategic advice.

Stephanie... This initiative is not about Trump. We need people to believe the elections. People across the country are asking if the election was secure. We need to know that Utah elections are secure. If you don't have secure elections, you have nothing.

Josh... you nailed most of the reasons why I am here. I am here because I am curious and you guys have questions and this is my county and you guys are my friends and I am friends with Lowell Nelson. Whether the election is secure or not, and I believe it is secure, there is a perception that is not secure. And that perception is a threat. I could be persuaded to do something that I don't think is efficient, I don't think is rational, I don't think is necessary, and I think is too expensive... I could be persuaded that we should still do something because people believe something and that is a real threat to our democracy. The message needs to get out there that there are more reasons why Trump lost.

Stephanie... nobody is trusting machines and robots. In all the scary movies, there are robots and machines killing people. No one wants to give power to something that is not human.

Natalie ... this is not our message

Josh ... but it's a fair question because it gives context.

Natalie ... people are questioning the 2020 election. People questioned the 2016. How many years did Trump go through with people questioning the 2016 election and if Trump was a legit president. This is really a bipartisan initiative. We want people to vote in precincts. And then numbers are publicly released. We want to decentralize the counting of votes. If you are uncomfortable with the counting of ballots, you can sign up to be a poll watcher. Poll watchers in the past were able to see ballots opened and watch the counting of ballots and could verify the process. Poll watchers today just watch a machine tick.

Josh There will not be enough people to be poll watchers.

Natalie ... There are enough people concerned with elections.

Josh ... Anyone who cares about elections will have to be working the elections.

Natalie We are returning to the same system that we had in the past with neighborhood precincts.

Josh ... Schools wont let us use their locations. They officially changed that. Problem for sex offenders to vote.

Natalie Then they can register as an absentee voter. And there has been talk in the past to have election day be a state holiday.

Natalie ... We need three counting judges and three receiving judges. And any party represented on the ballot can have someone be a poll watcher

Josh Right. So how long do you anticipate counting taking?

Natalie ... by the end of the day. We don't have to wait until mail-in ballots arrive.

Josh ... when can you begin taking signatures?

Natalie ... by this weekend. We were told we would have the packets by Friday.

Josh ... Make up 860 sample ballots and see how long it takes to count ballots.

Natalie ... initiative allows 3 receiving judges to aid 3 counting judges. And they can start counting during the day.

Josh... They can count during the day? That does solve a big problem but introduces some...

Natalie ... and counting judges sign an affidavit that they will keep it secret so information is not leaked out

Josh So the three counting judges can help process voters at first

Natalie ... we are counting in groups of 20

Josh ... That makes sense now. I thought it would not be possible to count that many at night

Natalie We like reducing the whole time of the process and the number of people involved

Melanie ... would you be willing to speak to our group in Summit County? We have been talking about this issue. We have a meeting coming up on Monday. That might be a good time to meet people.

Josh ... are you part of the group of people leaving California? Many are moving to Summit County.

Natalie... can we get your contact info Melanie?

Josh ... good to meet you Melanie. Good to see you ladies.

Stephanie ... thanks for the discussion.

Josh ... you can always call me if you have questions.

Melanie ... I think we are going for the polar opposite with the cannabis.

Josh ... I think there are some crossover. The medical program in Utah is pretty regulated. There are a lot of different limitations.

Natalie ... thanks for what you are doing with elections.

Josh ... Is all that stuff online? I imagine it will be on your website.

Natalie ... yes, it is.

Stephanie ... thanks, see you.