



The NHC GOP Podcast

Episode 2:13 **Voter IDs and Other Election Changes**

**Reuel Sample:** Welcome to the NHC GOP podcast. I'm Reuel Sample. I am honored to be joined by Jules Rothlein from the New Hanover County Republican Party. He is in charge of election integrity. Jules, welcome to the podcast.

**Julius Rothlein:** Thank you. I'm happy to be here. I hope we can have a good evening sharing a lot of good information with people.

**Reuel Sample:** I know we will. Jules, I wanted to start off by reading two things that are diametrically opposed. One is a quote from Democracy North Carolina.org. And it says S 326, which is all about voter integrity - election integrity - is a Jim Crow era voter suppression tactic cloaked with a deceptive frame of election integrity that when politicians use the term election integrity, it is a way to rationalize their efforts to further suppress voters, particularly black, brown and indigenous populations. So we know on what side of the aisle.

**Julius Rothlein:** Yeah, that that that that citation doesn't come from Donald Trump.

**Reuel Sample:** That's exactly right. On the other hand, you have a quote from The Federalist, and this is back from in July that new polling shows that a vast majority of US voters support election integrity. And this is by a poll conducted by the Honest Elections Project. And it shows that 88% of Americans support laws mandating a show

of a form of ID, including 82% of blacks and 83% of Hispanics. What's the truth here, Jules?

**Julius Rothlein:** Well, the truth line up when it comes to the world of voter integrity and voter ID, It lines up squarely with those people who advocate for voter ID. It does that because we have to make sure that we know who's voting in our precincts, who's voting in our elections. For the last several years, we've been using a system that was incredible. We would we would sit there as poll observers and watch when an individual would come in. In many cases, they tried to show their voter ID they were rejected because the laptop operators had to follow the what was then the law here in North Carolina. And we went through this kabuki dance. The person was asked for their name. And then asked where they live and if that name and that if that name and that address was on the laptop. The person can vote. But they that person could have been coming in, totally prepped on that name and that address knowing that that person in the laptop was currently deceased or wasn't going to show up to vote or they were coming in to vote in their place. And and so the voter ID, the photo ID at least gives us a first step, a first modicum of of understanding and believing that the person who is here, because he is holding an ID with the name Jules Rothlein on it is Jules Julius Rothlein.

**Reuel Sample:** And a picture to boot.

**Julius Rothlein:** And a picture to boot and a picture to prove. And the laptop operator. The judges. Under the rules for voter ID photo ID, they will look at that picture. And if that picture is the same as the person physically standing in front of them and that and they give the correct address, they're going to be allowed to vote. And all of us will feel a lot better about that because the likelihood is that person is who they say they are. Now, the other statement I'd make is this about the the two comments you wrote. Well, you didn't write, but that you read to me. The first one are people in denial. They are people who will actually go into a courtroom and argue that if you're black or Hispanic, you are not smart enough to know how to get a picture ID. I find that extremely condescending. And it certainly doesn't marry up with all of the people who I know who are black and Hispanic. Every one of them is capable of getting a voter ID and they have no problems with it. So that's my that's one of my observations. I think on this issue of voter ID, the Democrats are fighting the last battle here in North Carolina. They knew the argument was bogus before. They found some friendly courts to buy some very tenuous

arguments. And, of course, this this past April, as many people know, the North Carolina Supreme Court overturned the prior poor decisions that were written. And we are going into voter ID this election cycle. Right. When we come up into November 2023 for the local municipal elections and here in New Hanover County, if you're going to vote at Curry Beach, Carolina Beach, Wrightsville Beach, or in the city of Wilmington, you need to have a voter ID.

**Reuel Sample:** Let's let's put on that that that special gift that they gave you in law school where they gave you the ability to read other people's minds and and tell us why are the Democrats and it's really the Democrats, those on the left. Why are they so worried about voter ID laws? Why are they pushing? Because it would seem that that we would all want good, safe, secure elections. But why are they pushing for this?

**Julius Rothlein:** Well. With that great skill set that they taught me in law school. I can tell you the answer is something like this. They know on any good election day or night, they really don't have as many votes as you may think they have. They are concerned that the elections are going to be tight and they want to win. And the second part of the piece of the puzzle, and this is their problem. They want to win at all cost. They don't care about the ethics involved. So if you want to win at all cost, all rules are off the table. And the logical rules that logical people accept on how to keep elections fair and free and transparent. Those types of rules get in the way of ensuring certain election victories for the Democrats. They can't have it, so they will fight. And their lawyers learned in law school that it doesn't matter if you are telling the truth or not. You can advocate a position as hard as you want, and they do.

**Reuel Sample:** Let's talk about specific things that are going on here in North Carolina that that your team has worked on and that our politicians have finally gotten through. What are those things that are coming up in North Carolina? The big change is in this, am I correct, in this upcoming elections that are the municipal elections here in New Hanover County, will the ID laws be in place?

**Julius Rothlein:** The ID laws will be in place. You must have a photo ID for the municipal elections, whether you're voting early voting or if you're voting on Election Day. And by the way, if you're going to vote by absentee, you're going to have to submit

a photocopy of your ID with that absentee ballot. So the answer is yes. They get voter ID, Voter photo ID goes into effect this October, November.

**Reuel Sample:** There is also some increased security in requesting an absentee ballot. Is that correct?

**Julius Rothlein:** Well, the here's what here's what has to happen. I wouldn't call it an increased security because we we in North Carolina have at least been doing this for a while. If a person wants to vote absentee, they must submit a form to the board of elections requesting an absentee ballot. It's that form that kicks off the process. And in that form, the person will identify either their Social Security number or their driver's license number. And if that marries up with what the Board of Elections has in their records, they will send an absentee ballot out to that person. Now, the real problem, however, is once the absentee ballot is out, where does it go? Who touches it? Who plays with it. And with approximately a third of all ballots being cast today by absentee ballot, it's one of the reasons why we get concerned about that piece of the election process probably the most. And we and we tried to take steps that will allow us to see what's going on, the transparency issue. And along those same lines, it just so happens that last week we submitted a public records request to inspect the forms that people submit to get an absentee ballot. Okay. And our argument was that at this point in the game, they're not confidential. The the Board of Elections with at the direction of the state board of elections there controlled by the Democrats, came back and gave us, no, you're not going to get those forms. We're denying your request. So what do we have here? On the one hand, the the fact that you have to request an absentee ballot in writing in advance with some important identifying information. That's a good thing. But the fact that we can't look at that form starts to raise questions about the transparency of those requests.

**Reuel Sample:** Are we fighting that denial?

**Julius Rothlein:** Uh, not. We're not going to fight that denial because quite frankly, we know that's not going to go anywhere. And what we're going to do instead are other things that'll that'll make it quite clear that we're watching. We're looking. And, you know, the thing with the election integrity is some people forget you're not necessarily going to catch people fraudulently filling out a ballot. If you do, great. Let's let's put those

people in jail. But when people recognize the effort that we're doing observing the election. What that acts as a deterrence to election fraud. And we know based on experience that people know very well that we are very, very well engaged and have a lot of volunteers involved in the process in different places so that a lot of people who would think about committing fraud here in New Hanover County aren't so inclined.

**Reuel Sample:** In 2020 we saw because of the Covid, we saw an exponential increase in mail in ballots. 2022 we saw that trend continued because I believe we were still under some sort of mandatory stuff in North Carolina. Minimal, but still there. 2023 is really the first clear election cycle without mask mandates, social distance mandates and everything else. Are we anticipating the same level of mail in absentee ballots, or are we are we anticipating a decreased amount of them?

**Julius Rothlein:** Percentage wise, I'm expecting the same. And when I say the same, this is. This is how it. This is how it's been broken down the last three elections. A third of the people actually show up on election Day and vote. Another third take advantage of what's called early voting, the 15 days that precede Election Day. A third vote there and the other third use the absentee ballot. Now, the absentee ballot oftentimes comes back through the mail. But what sometimes people don't realize is a voter is allowed to take their absentee ballot if it's when they fill it out. They're actually allowed to return it in person during early voting, not on Election Day, but during early voting. So I'm I'm right now I've been asked this question. I'm still figuring a third. A third. A third. Okay. Uh, the the good news is we keep very, very good statistics. And so does the state I mean they have to. But we internally in New Hanover County GOP, we have very good statistics that show us what percentages are voting. And we're going to be able to know here in New Hanover County if that third, third, third continues or if it changes, I would argue that it should change. Absentee absentee ballots should be going by the wayside. Um, they're, you know, people, people who are ill injured in the hospital. Yeah. They need to use absentee ballots. But when it comes to the general population, you're, you're not going to get Covid by voting.

**Julius Rothlein:** And I think people just need to get out there and, and personally, and this is something that our committee feels very strongly about. Um, when we're when we talk election integrity, one of the things we're concerned about is the civics involved in voting. And we believe that a lot of that has been lost and that's not good for America.

It's good for America, even if you have to stand in line for an hour. It's good for America for people to vote in person so they can see their fellow citizens voting. And it can also it also can be a very good sign for people as to, hey, which way is this election going? Yeah, because you're in line with people while you're in line, you can talk. You can't talk about voting inside the voting booth, but you can talk. And I have always found in my life when I was able to vote in person that it was a very uplifting experience doing your civic duty. It was what we as Americans believe in fought for. Many people died for. And I just can't I just can't see why people feel comfortable, you know, mailing in their ballot like they were mailing in a request, you know, for something out of Amazon. To me, it just it's it's just not what you should be doing.

**Reuel Sample:** We're talking to Jules Rothlein from, uh, from the NHC GOP about election integrity. I want to I want to move on to early voting. But at first the two big things with, with absentee ballots that constantly be talked about in the news is that one is ballot harvesting and which is people going around and and gathering those things. Is that legal in North Carolina?

**Julius Rothlein:** Well, I mean, now you're talking to a lawyer. And I have to say it depends on the facts. Um, because there's. There is, is as you think of the traditional ballot harvesting operations. I don't think that can pass muster in North Carolina anywhere. However, there are things and techniques that can be done that would make it totally legal. For example, one of the things that the Board of Elections uses is a multi assistance team that actually can go out to nursing homes and other places and instruct people. On how to fill out a ballot request, a ballot, so forth and so on. But even those teams aren't authorized to collect all the ballots at the end of the day and bring them in right now. That that's a limitation. Now. There are other people now and don't like some of this. There's some the Democrats in the state Board of Elections have tried to come up with a system where they argue that you can send out people to be assistants.

**Reuel Sample:** Interesting.

**Julius Rothlein:** To people in in in in in in these different places. And and sometimes they even allow those assistants to bring back the ballot and and turn it in. So so the key the key thing with ballot to understand is. In your traditional absentee ballot. You, the voter. Must mail it in. Okay, that's number one. Or you, the absentee ballot person

has to give the ballot to a near relative and take it and turn it in. The key thing with ballot harvesting is the delivery of the ballots to the Board of Elections. And exactly all the things that transpire behind the scenes will indicate whether or not that quotes ballot harvesting is legal or not. But what you see and what you have seen in California and Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, that's clearly not legal in North Carolina.

**Reuel Sample:** Like just like anything else, the more hands that touch something, the less secure it is. Yes. And then finally, finally, the date of when absentee ballots they have to be in by close of voting on Election Day. They can't be postmarked on Election Day. They have to be in by. Is that correct?

**Julius Rothlein:** Yeah, yeah. Now that that law will go into effect in 2024. Okay. And basically, it says this If you're going to send in an absentee ballot by mail. It has to be received by the Board of Elections by I think it's 7:00 on the on on Election Day, the same day everyone else's votes are in to be counted. That ballot has to come in. If it comes in three days later, four days later, even if it was postmarked before the election, it's late and doesn't count. That is to be compared and contrast to the current environment, which is a very bad one as well, and has led to a lot of different opportunities for corruption. The current law in North Carolina says that an absentee ballot received three days after Election Day may be counted as long as it's postmarked by Election Day. Okay. So that gives that, you know, that there's a lot of interesting things that can go on there. And then on top of it, what people don't realize and we have fought and lost is the fact that the state Board of Elections takes an approach that if the day, the third day after election, if that falls on a federal holiday, then we move it back even further. And sure enough, wouldn't you know, that's happened once, once during the last two cycles and it's going to happen this this November.

**Julius Rothlein:** This November 7th is the way it all works out. They're going to have three extra days to get their absentee ballots in. Um, everybody in the legislature realized I shouldn't say everybody. The Democrats didn't. The Republicans in the legislature recognized that's ridiculous. And that was one of the many items that the New Hanover County GOP Election Integrity and others petitioned our legislature to enact. And sure enough, you take a careful look at it. You know, you take a look. Ted Davis great, great American. He made it happen. And and that's going to be the law in 2024. So at least we know here in New Hanover County, a local politicians hear our

complaints. And I'll add to the the point that both Senator Lee and and House Representative Miller have been outstanding listening to our complaints. They will tell us when they think we're arguing a bridge too far. But the most important thing to understand is we we have their ear because we, we come up with reasonable positions and the beauty of it all, and it's wonderful to see those reasonable positions are being enacted into North Carolina law as we speak.