



THE NHC GOP Podcast Transcript

Season 2, Episode 14: Early Voting and Keeping the Vote Honest

Reuel Sample: One of the other things that is changing and I'm not too sure if it's changing this year or next year is the length of days of early voting. Now, I have been honest before. I don't like early voting. I think it opens us up to a whole variety of things. But what we're doing right now is reducing the number of days for early voting. Is that correct?

Julius Rothlein: The reduction in number of days for early voting. Will occur in 2024. We will go from 15 to 8. That's to be compared and contrast to this municipal elections that are coming up. Now for this municipal elections there will be one polling place open for 15 days of early voting, and that will be the Northeast Regional Library. And then there'll be three, three other locations that will be opened for eight days. I believe it is eight days of early voting. Let me let me just check for one second.

Reuel Sample: Ladies and gentlemen, Jules Rothlein is nothing if not exact. It's he'll have it down for the hour in the second here shortly.

Julius Rothlein: Yeah, well, not going to do that. Um. Two, three, four, eight. Okay. Eight days. Eight days. Now, that happened. That happened because our Board of Elections members Bruce Kemp and Tom Morris raised the point about early voting and all of the problems that creates. I believe it creates more problems than it solves. But the but they made the point that the state law only requires that it be open for 15 days and everything else, the satellite offices, if you will, that'll be at Carolina Beach and it'll be at the the resource center and downtown at Cape Fear Community College. Those three locations will be open for eight days, a shorter period of time. But there will be a

place to go for a full 15 days. And one of the reasons why Bruce put that forward, I believe, is he realized that the new law is going to be for eight days. So why don't we get used to it and, and I think it made a lot of sense and I think it works out great. But for this election in 2023, the municipal elections, technically early voting is for 15 days, but only at one location and at the other three eight days.

Reuel Sample: So we're going to get hit on that because places like Georgia and Texas are actually increasing the length of their early voting. We're going to get hit on that because we're going to start hearing people say, well, we're we're blocking legitimate voters who can't get to the polls. Is that the to extend early voting is to extend the opportunity for people to vote. Are we blocking people from going to vote, from going down from 15 days to eight days? This is going to be a tough one, but a necessary one for us to defend.

Julius Rothlein: Okay. Well, first of all, the state of North Carolina can decide to have no days of early voting if it wants. Okay. In the old days and remember them, you really had to have you had to be out of town. You or I had to be deployed on a ship or we were in a faraway land and we would we'd be allowed to early vote, if you will, by usually absentee ballot. The problem with 15 days is why not 30 days? Why not 40 days? Why not 60 days? Well, the answer is we have to keep we have to put some of this in, make it some of this stuff reasonable. Okay. And and 15 days of early voting is just not reasonable. Um, and I'll give you an example of, of one of the things that happened during the 2020 election, and I know it because I was personally involved. Uh, you may recall that we had early voting in 2020. We had nine early voting locations. It was a zoo, okay. Everywhere in New Hanover County, people were voting. But. People voted early, they were encouraged to vote early. Democrats made a big point that their get their people out and do absentee ballots or vote early. Well. Uh, shortly before the actual election day, but after the story of Hunter Biden's laptop computer and all the corruption came out, we we had several people, Democrats walked into the Republican headquarters and said, I had no idea Joe Biden was such a crook. I want to change my vote. I did exactly what the party told me to. I voted early. I want to change my vote.

Reuel Sample: Not going to happen.

Julius Rothlein: And I'm sitting and I'm sitting there saying, I'm sorry, your vote is in. You voted too early, you should have waited a little bit longer. And that's part of what I would say to this early voting is for people who realize as they're coming up on the election, I really can't get there, not because I want to sleep, you know, take my time and not have to get into a line. It should be for people who are coming up on the election, don't have enough time to get an absentee ballot and realize I got to vote early because I'm going to be out of town on Election Day. And you're going to know that real. You're going to know that in real time. And that's that. If we have early voting for anybody, that's what it should be for. Now, for somebody who really thinks I like to vote in my pajamas or I really don't want to get in line, then use the absentee ballot system, go out, request your absentee ballot, fill it out at home. Hopefully you'll do it correctly and send it back. But there's something else I have to add about this. This early voting 15 days. It just exhausts exhaust human resources out the ying yang. Not only does it exhaust the people who are working in the polls, the, you know, the the the precinct judges and the precinct assistants, but it it overwhelms the political parties who want to put poll observers out there. The more time you have your polls open, the more shifts you have to cover.

Julius Rothlein: The more you're going to have to rely on hopefully a lot of people. But it's a it's a finite amount of people. And one of the things that happens when people get exhausted and you exhaust resources is they make mistakes. And while someone's going to say, oh, it's it's it's only a vote, who cares? That's the point.

Julius Rothlein: It is. It is a vote. We do care. This is something. We have to be working on 100% to be correct, not incorrect. And I'm much rather have people who are working in the polls who aren't exhausted. Doing the job, then people who are just totally been been run rabbit by the by the whole there's.

Reuel Sample: A whole bunch of things that this is going to change is that those those those votes that people count the cast aren't going to be sitting around someplace for 15 days. They'll be sitting around for eight days. Is that which it's still a problem. The enormous cost associated with running these polling places for two weeks is enormous.

Julius Rothlein: And and you know what? And then you put I love when you bring up the issue of cost. You know, a lot of this does come down to money. The Board of

Elections gets its money. From the county commissioners. That's who funds the Board of Elections. If you tell the if you tell the county commissioners, you're going to have seven fewer days to pay for polling places to be open. They're not going to push back because it saves a lot of money and and because it does no damage to anyone else. You could still there's so many ways to vote. I can't believe we're having an argument over 15 days, eight days, whatever.

Julius Rothlein: There's another thing. Every once in a while you'll hear different boards of elections and their directors of elections to include ours to all of a sudden start coming in and complaining about the lack of resources to conduct the elections. Now, this is really quite funny because the last time, the last time I heard it, it was, Oh, it's we have all this new voting by with with people's photos. This is this is going to create new hardships. This is going to be so hard. Take time. Take money. I'm sitting there going, you've known this was going to happen for the last four years. Don't you do any prior planning to ensure that that doesn't happen? But here's the other thing. I've seen several boards of elections. Do they they they claim, oh, gee, I don't have enough money. So then they want to go and be allowed to beg to organizations like Zucker.

Reuel Sample: The Zuck Bucks.

Julius Rothlein: Zuck Bucks. And and so, and I'm looking at this. I'm saying, wait, these are these are public elections. Why are we using any money that isn't public money to address the election? This this isn't this is this isn't third party nonpartisan, non uh, this is not a third party election that we shouldn't be taking any money from them. We know that it was corrupting in 2020. So what what happens, you will find is that when you're talking about elections being open for 15 days, people find it easy to rationalize taking money from third parties, and that should never happen. And here's what's really good about all this, that everything does come full circle. One of the pieces of legislation that the North Carolina legislature is passing says clearly that the part that the State Board of Elections and the county Board of Elections may not take any money from third parties to administer their elections. And I'll be I'll tell you this right up front, that was one of the big items that we here in New Hanover County were pushing. We could not justify public elections being funded by third parties, especially when they were corrupting in what they did. And along those same lines. The Board of Elections and not the Board of Elections. The legislature enacted a piece of legislation.

Reuel Sample: Hang on. Let's be clear about this, is that this is this is the Republican majority legislature that was it was always, always, always opposed by the Democrats in the legislature and the governor and and up until recently upheld by a very liberal court system here in North Carolina. And all that changed last year.

Julius Rothlein: Well, all of that is in the process of changing the idea of third party coming in, third party money coming in to corrupt. The election is not there. And and we're going to keep pushing for it because that's one of the ways you corrupt an election. It's not it's it's not necessarily what circle you fill in on the ballot. It's by other things you do behind the scenes. And and what we're trying to do is keep all that nonsense out of the process.

Reuel Sample: I would bring up Washington State's ridiculous model of voting online but I value your health too much. So I want to move on to New Hanover County specifically. Because we are we are putting in place judges and other polling observers and people who are directly, directly working on Election Day. I came across this quote earlier by Hans Hans von Spakovsky. He is from the Heritage Foundation, a great organization.

Julius Rothlein: Know of them well. Great guy.

Reuel Sample: He wrote recently this was back in May 18th, 2023. Common sense measures like voter ID, election audits, clean voter rolls, which we haven't talked about voter rolls here yet, secure absentee ballot management and transparency in the registration, voting and tabulating process will not only provide us with a fair and honest election, but also guarantee public confidence in their outcomes. And that's what we're missing right now. Is that is that all of the stuff that went on specifically with the 2020 elections, but even going back on that is that the elections may or may not have been quote unquote, rigged. But the the the perception, which is reality really, is that the the election process was open to to shoddiness and to corruption and and gave the appearance that people couldn't count on it. So what are we doing here in New Hanover County specifically to make sure that not only these 2023 elections, municipals are very important, but getting ready for what's going to be a very contentious 2024 presidential election. Right.

Julius Rothlein: Okay. Well, uh. I'm going to give you a series of different things. And again, as as I think you realize, all these things are mutually supportive in standing alone, they may not make any difference whatsoever, but together they make for a true election integrity program. Now. In our in our elections. People go into the polling place. And they see people who are precinct judges, assistants, people who are helping the judges do things. About a crew of about nine people in a typical precinct. And the question is, hey, how'd they get here? Who are they?

Julius Rothlein: Well, the good news is they're our neighbors. They're our friends. They are residents of the county who are voting in the county.

Reuel Sample: They're podcast hosts. They're podcast hosts. Because I was an election official.

Julius Rothlein: Yes. Yes, you were. And you could you could talk about that, I'm sure. Um, and. In addition to all that, under North Carolina law, which is and this is common throughout the United States, the respective political parties, Republican and Democrat, are allowed to nominate people to serve as precinct judges or assistants. And each each precinct has three judges to give for those people who may not know that. Well, what we have done is we have gone back and looked at this and said, have we been doing enough to make sure we have loyal Republicans inside the polling place? What's the basic belief behind it? Loyal Republicans are not going to cheat. And if they see any cheating going on, they're going to stop it. They're going to raise their hand. So that's a set of eyes watching the process. That's very important. So what happens is we are allowed to nominate names to be judges and assistants. We submit it to the Board of Elections. We have two members on the Board of Elections. The Democrats have three.

Reuel Sample: They have three because there is a Democrat governor.

Julius Rothlein: Yes, that's correct. And if once we have a Republican governor, there will be 3 to 2 Republican here in New Hanover County.

Julius Rothlein: And and we we put our names in. Democrats put their names in, and they go through the list and they start the appointment process based primarily looking

at past experience in these different positions. Right now on the list that we have before the Board of Elections. We have 130 names, 130 names. Now, not all. Not all 130 are going to be judges. But they we might have we could have as many as 41 judges. 42 judges, something like that. And the balance of people will be probably hired on to be assistant.

Speaker3: Now, let's put that in perspective. Let's put that in perspective. You said 100 and what, 139 names? 134 years ago. Four years ago. How many names did we field to become judges? Has that is that is that number significantly higher than what we used to be able to do?

Julius Rothlein: In the recent past. If our numbers crept up to 100, it would be a lot.

Reuel Sample: So you're absolutely ecstatic about all this?

Julius Rothlein: We are. We are more than ecstatic. We we have done something this go round that we weren't able to do two years ago.

Julius Rothlein: It's there's no question that having these folks inside the polling place. It. And people know there's a lot of Republicans now in the polling place and there's a greater balance of Republicans in the polling place. People are less inclined to think you can get away with something criminal. Uh, now, all of those people, although we nominate them, they have to go through the training given by the Board of Elections. And if they go through it successfully and most do, they'll be called upon and they're paid a small stipend for their services. And but they're they're a crucial part of our election integrity program. And I can honestly tell you, four years ago, we weren't thinking of doing it that way. We weren't thinking of it that way. We are today. So that goes to your first part of what are we doing to make something better?

Julius Rothlein: Here's another good example. The hardest thing to deal with is the cleaning of the rolls. Um, there's a lot of rules that get thrown into the game. And unfortunately, we feel as if we are at the point where we're not going to get anything done until we have make some major changes in the law because people's names are allowed to stay on the rolls much longer. Then then they should. And it all equates back to a federal statute that people interpret or misinterpret. And that's what we're dealing

with. But we do have people looking at the at the rolls. We do. We do we have placed challenges in the past.

Reuel Sample: Um, and once again, that goes to that goes to security again because if you have a whole bunch of people on the rolls that you're not keeping track of, some of them could be dead, some of them could be moved. But if they're still in the rolls, that allows somebody to go and and vote in their name, especially since we don't have since we don't have an ID and even with ID, if you put a picture in there, information on it is that they're in the rolls. And so until they're clean, it's a security issue.

Julius Rothlein: It is. And and our local board of elections at the direction of the state board of elections has been less than aggressive. They basically go through a process where before they'll take your name off the roll. Uh, we have to go through like two election cycles where you don't vote and you haven't responded to a postcard that's sent out saying, Are you still voting here in New Hanover County? I personally think that's in this day and age that's ridiculous. But that that's what we're up against. And even when, you know, somebody died, it's hard to get them taken off the rolls. Um, and I can give you a story about one guy if, if you think you think the listeners can handle it.

Reuel Sample: Go ahead.

Julius Rothlein: Ryan Genghis Khan. I swear to God, that's his name. He lived over on Castle Street. And one of his neighbors came into the Republican Party and says, hey, I just found out my neighbor Ryan passed away. Uh, but what's going on with him in terms of voting? And so we started, we started looking and we could. We couldn't find his death certificate. Uh, and nobody from the family came in to say he's died. And here's proof of his death. The death certificate. So finally what I did was I we start I played Dick Tracy and we started going back to where he lived and where he died.

Julius Rothlein: And of course, what happened was he died in Nash County. And when it comes to death certificates. Death certificates are filed in the county in which you died. Not not where you lived. Now, usually people die in the same county they live and whatever. But in this case, nobody was moving on, taking his name out. Well, we went out and not only did we find out where he died, we went to the funeral home, verified his name, Social Security number, the whole megillah. And we finally brought it

back to the department, to our director of elections, and say, trust us, this guy is dead. Take his name off this voting rolls. And about three months later, his name got off the voter rolls. But the entire process, he was dead a good six months before anybody ever said take his name off the rolls. And of course, the problem is with a name that's still listed as active on the voting rolls. Especially before photo ID, virtually anybody could come in and say they were that person if they knew that person was dead, had a street address and vote however they wanted to.

Reuel Sample: And without any kind of ID, it's actually it's sort of hard to track that. And let's be clear, voter fraud is a felony. It's a it's a major crime. So let's. Oh, yes, let's talk. So we've talked about judges and polling assistants.

Julius Rothlein: I want to add one thing, though, to that whole thing. Uh, but about cleaning the voter rolls. Here is another success story that we have. Cleaning the voter rolls everybody knows is important. Two legislatures earlier, they had put some tentative money in to approve a contract with the Election Registration Information Center. ERIC was its name. And we got wind of that and we said, what we're going to we're going to have a this North Carolina is going to have a contract with ERIC to clean our voter rolls. Well, you see, ERIC is an organization that had as its supporters a bunch of Democratic operatives. Okay. And they were no more going to clean the rolls than I'm six foot six. And, you know, I'm 5 foot four.

Julius Rothlein: So anyway, we petitioned our legislature and said, hey, wait a minute. This, this this system is a sham. There's no evidence that where they have operated, that they've cleaned any voter rolls. But what we do know for an absolute certainty is they've added names to the voter rolls.

Speaker3: Wow.

Julius Rothlein: We know that for facts. We had the facts. Here it is. It's sort of like the transactions for the Bidens. We have the facts. Well, our our legislatures heard that. And where two sessions ago they were willing to go along with the contract in this in this session, they passed legislation that terminated any contracts or any funding of the ERIC contract. So at least we don't have that corrupt piece of the puzzle embedded into our elections here in North Carolina.

Reuel Sample: So there are very few things that I think government should actually be doing. But but handling all aspects of the elections and the election rules I think is one of them. So so we've talked about getting good, solid Republicans inside the polls, whether they're judges, whether they're like I was a greeter, I thoroughly enjoyed it. Uh, yes, we're talking about cleaning the rolls and making sure that Mr. Khan is not able to vote anymore. Uh, now, so let's let's, uh. Right now we're pushing to get some, what we call MAT teams. Is that correct? So, so we're looking at helping folks, folks, into, uh, in assisted living.

Julius Rothlein: At our next meeting this coming Monday, we're going to bring up the issue of how many names do we have to offer the Board of Elections, uh, to be MATS volunteers. Uh, by our last unofficial count, we had about eight, which is good. Um, and so we are going to we're going to continue to try to do that as well. And I think the Board of Elections will appreciate that.

Reuel Sample: The final big thing that we're doing here in New Hanover County.

Julius Rothlein: Well, I'd be remiss if I don't discuss poll observers. Okay. Now poll observers. Poll observers are actually appointed under North Carolina law by the chairman of the Republican Party. They are the eyes and ears of the Republican Party inside the polling place. The same polling place that the precinct judges are operating and the precinct assistants are operating. The only other group of people who are authorized to be inside there for the entire election are what's called poll observers. Now, since 2020, we have managed in all the elections to employ outfit over 400 poll observers.

Reuel Sample: Wow.

Julius Rothlein: And and of course, it varies from election to election and what have you. Uh, but we're talking a volunteer opportunity that many people have asked to participate in. We train them. We have an excellent training program. It's only gotten better over time. And they're only required to serve a four hour shift. Many people decide to do several four hour shifts, as you might imagine. With the exception of

there's, there's five restrictions in the law, but with the exception of five restrictions, which none of our people have ever been caught breaking.

Reuel Sample: Let's make that clear. They haven't been caught because they haven't been doing anything wrong.

Julius Rothlein: But here's the point. There are five restrictions on a poll observer. But once you get over those five restrictions, and I'll tell you what they are if you want. The poll observer has wide discretion. To walk and around and look about what's going on because the person is allowed to report on irregularities, question irregularities to the to the to the chief judge. The statute says with the exception of these five restrictions, the the judges shall SHALL ensure that poll observers can see whatever it is they desire. North Carolina statute actually has the word DESIRE in it. I have never seen that before in my life.

Reuel Sample: That's that's wide discretion. That covers anything.

Julius Rothlein: And it does. So what a poll observer can't do are obvious things. They can't we can't electioneer. You can't go in as a poll observer and run around with a Donald Trump sign. You can't do that. You can't interfere with with the election process. Okay. I can't go over I can't pull the plug out of the wall on a computer that's being used by a laptop operator. I can't I can't communicate with a voter. Very simple. I keep my mouth shut.

Julius Rothlein: I can't go into the area where a poll where a voter is filling out a their ballot. That's not hard. Every one of our polling places have areas with these large tables and blue sides on them. It's quite clear where people are filling out their ballot. You don't walk over there. That's what we're told. That's what we teach. So with the exception of avoiding those terrible things, and if anyone did that, I would fire him as a poll observer. But with the exception of that, we have enormous ability to observe what's going on so we can satisfy ourselves. What's going on is legit.

Reuel Sample: So one of the things that a poll observer can do, for example, especially now that we've got ID, is that if a poll observer sees somebody checking in and the person who's checking them is not is not checking their photo ID, is that that poll

observer can go right to the chief judge. That's the only person that they can go to and they can go to the chief judge and say, you're not checking IDs. This this is an irregularity. You're not you're not following through on that.

Julius Rothlein: That's correct. And and before what would happen is the person would just come in and say, my name is Joe Blow and I live at this address and that and and if that name showed up in the laptop, that was Joe Blow, whether or not it was or not. Yeah. Um, so, so the, the, the answer is yeah, there's, there'll be a lot more that poll observers this election time will be looking to observe and see if things are being done correctly.

Reuel Sample: So you don't necessarily have to have a combative personality for this but you do have to have good instincts. You have to be able to to it's a four hour shift is that you have to be in there for four hours. So you have to you have. Right. Uh, but you you have to be wise in what you're going to challenge and, and but be bold enough to to make those challenges.

Julius Rothlein: That's correct. The we're looking always for people with good judgment. The good news the good news is that the rank and file of people in the Republican Party have that. So that gets us over a big hurdle. And I can assure you, if we saw somebody who we knew was going to create unnecessary problems, we would find another place for them to volunteer. And the other thing that we do to make to give people the confidence to be a poll observer, our training program that lasts an hour and a half, that includes this time around a practical exercise on how to report problems on an app. I mean, it's it's we are like light years away from what I was doing in 2020.

Reuel Sample: Jules Rothlein from The New Hanover County Republican Party leading the the effort here both in the county and at the state level for election integrity because it really is all about that confidence in the vote is that when you go in. We want to make sure that every legal vote counts. But there's that. We want to make sure that if you're voting, it's legal. That's this is what it's all about. It's not about restricting people rom the polls. It's not about Jim Crow if you're from the that organization if you're listening tonight. It's about making sure that the most important thing that we do as Americans it's the most important thing that we do vote is is handled correctly. Thank you for all that you do, Jules Rothlein, how can people get in touch with you?

Julius Rothlein: Well, the easiest way to do it is I'll give my email address and my phone. Email is Julius.Rothlein@gmail.com. And my telephone number is (703) 980-2816.

Reuel Sample: Jules. Julius, we all call you Jules. Thank you for everything that you. Thanks for joining us here on our podcast. All the best. It's a it's a busy time of year coming up for you and but not so busy as it's going to be next year. So all the best. And thanks again for joining us.

Julius Rothlein: Okay. Thank you.