

President Trump: Government Officials Have a 'Profound Responsibility' to Do This

Wednesday morning, President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence kicked off the first public meeting of the Commission on Election Integrity, which met at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building adjacent to the White House.

The vice president is chairing the commission with Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach serving as the vice chairman. The bipartisan group of election experts includes:

- Indiana Secretary of State Connie Lawson
- New Hampshire Secretary of State Bill Gardner
- Maine Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap
- former Ohio Secretary of State Ken Blackwell
- Election Assistance Commissioner Christy McCormick
- former Arkansas state Rep. David Dunn
- Wood County, West Virginia, Clerk Mark Rhoades
- Heritage Foundation Senior Legal Fellow and Manager of the Election Law Reform Initiative Hans von Spakovsky
- President and General Counsel of the Public Interest Legal Foundation J. Christian Adams
- Jefferson County, Alabama, Probate Judge Alan King

The president, during opening remarks, said the commission is tasked with “the sacred duty of upholding the integrity of the ballot box and the principle of ‘one citizen, one vote.’” He said every time voter fraud occurs, it cancels out the vote of a lawful citizen and undermines democracy, and that can’t happen.

“Any form of illegal or fraudulent voting, whether by non-citizens or the deceased, and any form of voter suppression or intimidation must be stopped,” he said. “All public officials

have a profound responsibility to protect the integrity of the vote. We have no choice. If we want to make America great again, we have to protect the integrity of the vote and our voters."

The president said more than 30 states have already agreed to share their publicly available voter registration information with the commission and the other states. He said "one has to wonder what they're worried about" regarding those states that have refused to cooperate with the commission's task.

"This issue is very important to me because, throughout the campaign and even after it, people would come up to me and express their concerns about voter inconsistencies and irregularities, which they saw," he said. "In some cases having to do with very large numbers of people in certain states.

"This is not a Democrat or a Republican issue; it's an American issue. It's about the concern of so many Americans that improper voting has taken place and canceling out the votes of lawful American citizens. That is why President Theodore Roosevelt once said, it is the affair of every honest voter, wherever born, to see that no fraudulent voting is allowed anywhere."

The president reminded the commissioners they had been "entrusted with a great responsibility" to advance the cause of fair, honest and lawful elections, which "protect our democracy." He demanded a transparent process—which is why the entire proceedings were livestreamed via YouTube, perhaps a first for any presidential commission—and that he expected each of them to have "a very open mind and with no conclusions already drawn."

He said the commission will "fairly and objectively" follow the facts wherever they may lead. He said he looks forward to the commission's findings and making them available to the

public. He also called on the remaining states to give their full support to the commission's work.

The following is the transcript of Vice President Pence's opening remarks:

Election integrity matters to every American. President Calvin Coolidge reminded us, in his words, that the "whole system of American government rests on the ballot box."

And President Reagan declared that the "right to vote is the crown jewel of American liberties."

By establishing this commission, President Trump is taking action to ensure that the ballot box remains inviolate, and that the crown jewel shines brighter than ever before.

At the president's direction, I'll have the honor to serve as chairman of this commission. And it's a privilege to convene this first meeting today. President Trump knows that the integrity of our electoral system transcends party lines, and I'm grateful this commission has brought together a distinguished group of bipartisan election experts and public officials from federal, state and the local level. And together, this bipartisan group will perform a truly non-partisan service to the American people.

I'd especially like to recognize our vice-chairman, who you'll hear more from after the president's remarks, a man whose long service has established him as a national leader on election integrity, Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach. I also, as a point of personal privilege, would like to express my thanks and appreciation to Indian's Secretary of State, Connie Lawson, who joins us as a part of this panel.

President Trump knows that the principle of "one person, one vote" is foundational to the American system of democracy. This commission has been charged to study the

registration and voting processes used in federal elections. The commission will identify the laws, rules, policies, activities, strategies and practices that will enhance the American people's confidence in the integrity of our electoral system. We'll also explore the vulnerabilities in our system that could lead to improper voter registration and even improper voting.

This commission, let me be clear—this commission has no preconceived notions or preordained results. We're fact-finders. And in the days ahead, we will gather the relevant facts and data, and at the conclusion of our work, we will present the president with a report of our findings.

I'm confident this commission will have a healthy and robust debate, but the president and I expect nothing less because respectful debate is also a hallmark of our democracy. And I know that we'll find many areas of common ground, as well.

I'm pleased to report that the commission has already started its work, requesting publicly available data, and we are grateful for the more than 30 states that have already indicated their intention to provide this information, pursuant to the laws of their states.

Today is just the first of several meetings that the commission will hold in the coming months. Today we will hear from each of the commission's members. Each of you brings a unique perspective based on your experience and your research, and we welcome your participation and your insights.

I'd like to note that our commission includes five current and former secretaries of state. And Secretary Kobach and I look forward to working with each one of you, as the chief election officers from across America, to foster a collaborative and respectful relationship for the benefit

of your states' voters and our nation's electoral process.

And finally, as the Commission on Election Integrity begins its work, I'd like to personally invite the American people to offer their public comments and input on our work and the challenges and opportunities that face our electoral system.

We want to hear the voice of the American voter—because that's really what this is all about. You know, it's the greatest privilege of my life to serve as vice president to a president who cares so deeply about the integrity of America's elections and the right of each and every American to see the sanctity of their vote protected.

This president knows that the success of our democracy depends on the American people's confidence in this electoral system. And the president and I are both confident that this bipartisan commission will make the strongest democracy in the history of the world even stronger."

You can watch the entire meeting in the video clip above.
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