

Bill Bradbury and Tim Palmer: Voting by mail is safer, easier and cheaper

[madison.com/ct/opinion/column/bill-bradbury-and-tim-palmer-voting-by-mail-is-safer-easier-and-cheaper/article_8ab889fe-032f-557c-a610-8d13dddb19f7.html](https://www.madison.com/ct/opinion/column/bill-bradbury-and-tim-palmer-voting-by-mail-is-safer-easier-and-cheaper/article_8ab889fe-032f-557c-a610-8d13dddb19f7.html)

By Bill Bradbury and Tim Palmer | guest columnists

May 17,
2020



FILE - In this March 10, 2020, file photo wearing gloves, a King County Election worker collect ballots from a drop box in the Washington State primary in Seattle. Washington is a vote by mail state. A new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds Democrats are now much more likely than Republicans to support their state conducting elections exclusively by mail, 47% to 29%. (AP Photo/John Froschauer, File)

John Froschauer

Voting by mail works. We know. We've been doing it in Oregon for 20 years.

Let us tell you why we vote entirely by mail.

More people get to vote. Data proves this in Oregon, Colorado and elsewhere.

This makes voting more democratic, addressing a fundamental American value, enshrined in the Constitution.

It's safer. No exposure to COVID-19, or even the common cold.

It's easier, especially for the elderly. No one leaves home. None of us have to skip work, find a babysitter or cram another commitment into the day. There's no need to drive or catch a bus to the polls.

Voting by mail saves time and, most important here: no lines, which have become a travesty of democracy. People have recently waited in line at polling places six hours. Lines require us to stand in rain, snow, cold or heat.

Voting by mail saves money. Personally it costs nothing; even postage is covered. And it's cheaper for our local, county and state governments. In Oregon it costs one-third less than operating polling places did.

No need for polling place staffs, and shortages of staff are why Milwaukee went from 180 polling places to five in the last election; as a result, a lot of people didn't get to vote. Senior volunteers fill a lot of these jobs, and they shouldn't be congregating.

Along that line, voting by mail requires no voting machines. You don't have to buy machines, rent them, set them up, store them, replace them, maintain them and check their accuracy. Voting on a paper ballot with a ballpoint pen intimidates none of us, unlike the array of buttons we confront behind the voting-booth curtain.

Voting by mail means no stressed rush, unlike when you step into that voting booth with a crowd impatiently waiting in line behind you. At home you can be deliberate. You can pause and look up information about a candidate.

Voting by mail is popular; a Wall Street Journal/NBC poll recently showed that two-thirds of Americans support it. Support in Oregon is overwhelming.

Here in Oregon, through two decades of voting by mail, fraud has been extremely rare and never significant.

Voting by mail leaves a paper trail — a critical feature for exposing fraud or machine malfunction/hacking and one that few voting machines provide. If fraud happens to be your concern, then vote by mail.

Voting by mail is nonpartisan. Making voting easier, cheaper and safer is good no matter what your affiliation. Studies show no benefit to one side or the other.

With no evidence whatsoever, President Donald Trump on April 7 said, "Mail ballots, they cheat. Mail ballots are very dangerous for this country because of cheaters." We take offense at that. It's false. It's illogical. It's wrong. He's making it up. We know, because, like

we said, we've been voting by mail for 20 years. The president doesn't want to allow people to vote by mail, but he did it in 2008 and 2020.

A Senate bill now introduced would give everyone the choice to vote by mail while preserving states' power to make their own decisions about voting procedures. You might check to see if your senators support this measure. That would tell you a lot about whether or not they want more people to vote.

If some people still want to go to polling places, keep that option. But also make it easy to vote by mail. Our democracy depends on it. We need to make voting safer, faster, cheaper, fairer, better.

Listen: in Oregon we love voting by mail. You will too.

This is America. Everyone who's eligible to vote should be allowed and encouraged to do it.

Bill Bradbury is the former Oregon Secretary of State. His job was to oversee elections during the state's first 10 years of vote-by-mail. Tim Palmer is the author of books and opinion columns about Oregon.