



The Fraudulent Fraud Squad: Understanding the Battle over Voter ID: A Sneak Preview from "The Voting Wars: from Florida 2000 to the Next Election Meltdown"

Richard L. Hasen

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A Letter from Author Richard L. Hasen

In 2000, the U.S. presidential election went into overtime as just a few hundred votes, out of millions cast, separated Republican George W. Bush from Democrat Al Gore in the state of Florida, whose twenty-five electoral votes determined the nation's next president. For thirty-six days, the country was riveted and divided between Democrats and Republicans as the election went into overtime. Election contests, recounts, and almost two dozen lawsuits culminated in one of the most controversial Supreme Court decisions in U.S. history, *Bush v. Gore*. Everything related to the election controversy went under the microscope, from the varieties of election machinery, to the rules for vote-counting, to the poor drafting of Florida's election statutes, to the partisan officials involved in the recount, to the role of the courts in resolving election disputes. Calls for reform came from everywhere, including the Supreme Court.

If you think that nearly a dozen years later the country would have fixed its problems with how we run our elections, you'd be dead wrong.

Since Florida we have witnessed a partisan war over election rules. The number of election-related lawsuits has more than doubled, and election time brings out inevitable accusations by political partisans of voter fraud and voter suppression. These allegations have shaken public confidence, as campaigns deploy armies of lawyers and the partisan press revs up whenever elections are expected to be close and the stakes are high.

We are just one razor-thin presidential election away from chaos and an undermining of the rule of law. In summer 2012, Yale University Press will publish my book, *The Voting Wars: From Florida 2000 to the Next Election Meltdown*, looking at these questions: How did we get here? Why haven't things improved since 2000? How has the rise of the Internet and social media made the potential for a catastrophic electoral meltdown much worse? But the book won't be out until this summer, and the public is hearing a lot of information—and misinformation—now about states adopting new, tough voter identification wars. *The Fraudulent Fraud Squad: Understanding the Battle over Voter ID* presents an excerpt from *The Voting Wars* for readers who want to get an immediate handle on the partisan fight over these controversial new voting requirements. Are they really needed to prevent fraud? Will they suppress the votes of thousands of Democratic voters? The answers might surprise you.

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