

On voter fraud, Christie keeps talking through his hat | Opinion

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By Frank Askin

Gov. Chris Christie does not know what he is talking about when he accuses Hillary Clinton of condoning voter fraud because she wants to make it easier to register and vote.

In response to Clinton's call for easing voting restrictions and endorsing universal voting registration, Gov. Christie joined other Republican politicians in charging the Democratic presidential candidate with wanting to encourage fraudulent voting.

As quoted in the press, Christie said, Clinton "doesn't know what she is talking about. In New Jersey, we have early voting. I don't want to expand it and increase the opportunities for fraud, maybe that's what Mrs. Clinton wants to do."

Will someone please ask Christie just how many cases of in-person voting fraud he brought during his six years as U. S. attorney or how many his administration has brought in 5 1/2 years as governor.

Offhand, I am not aware of any.

Gov. Christie only compounds the problem and demonstrates his ignorance of New Jersey law when he attacks Clinton's call for early voting, claiming that New Jersey has early voting, which he does not want to expand because it would encourage fraud.

First of all, New Jersey does not have early voting, other than mail-in ballots, which Clinton never referred to. But it is precisely mail-in ballots which are most susceptible to manipulation by malicious politicians. The early voting endorsed by Clinton is in-person voting at a polling place by people who find it difficult to get to the polls on a Tuesday.

I am also aware that Gov. Christie has condemned Election Day registration, and that his attorney general is opposing current litigation under the state constitution to require New Jersey to adopt EDR, which already exists as a result of legislation in 13 states and the District of Columbia.

Voter fraud is one of those chimeras Republicans use to justify trying to discourage voting by segments of the population who tend to vote Democratic — namely the young and racial minorities.

To my recollection, there have been about three cases of in-person voting fraud in New Jersey in recent years —

two in Sayreville against men who did not live in town but who registered to vote from their office addresses, and one against a kid in Bergen County who voted in place of his father.

Certainly there is voter fraud, but it is not committed by individuals impersonating someone else in order to cast a ballot. The threat of prosecution for perjury seems sufficient to discourage such efforts to cast one extra vote. Indeed, just about every court that has dealt with the issue has found that to be the case.

In the New Jersey case challenging the 21-day advance registration requirement, the trial court observed, "Both parties agree that to date the EDR states have stated they have not experienced problems with voter fraud and, over the last decade, there have been very few cases of fraudulent in-person registration either in EDR states or nationwide."

In fact, almost all of the states that have Election Day registration allow voters who provide some kind of identification to vote right on the machine because the threat of misrepresentation has been shown to be negligible. They do not require them to cast provisional ballots so their identities can be verified before the votes are counted. The fraud that does exist is committed by election officials trying to stuff the ballot boxes and occasionally by use of mail-in ballots, none of which would be prevented by proposals to curtail early in-person voting or by draconian photo ID requirements being pushed by right-wing politicians.

It's time for our straight-talking governor to come out and admit that, when it comes to voter fraud, he has no idea what he's talking about.

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