

THE INDIANA CITIZEN'S CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE: SECRETARY OF STATE CANDIDATE DESTINY WELLS

The [2021 Indiana Civic Health Index](#) and other reports consistently show Indiana in the Bottom 10 for voter turnout. What is your reaction to this?

Answer: Our campaign messaging heavily focuses on voter education, including that the [2021 Indiana Civic Health Index](#) shows Indiana ranks 46th in the nation in voter participation. Additionally, in 2020 – one of the most consequential elections of our lifetimes – 1.6 million registered Hoosiers did not vote. We are telling voters that Indiana is not a red state, but a purple state with a voter turnout problem. This message is resonating with voters.

Some states have adopted the following measures to increase turnout. Which, if any, do you favor, and why?

Answers:

No excuse absentee voting: Currently, Indiana has 11 exceptions for casting a ballot early. My opponent has advocated for reducing those exceptions to four, including forcing voters 65 years and older to vote in person. We wish to maintain all 11 and expand from there.

Automatic voter registration: Our goal is to raise civic participation in our elections. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), 22 states and Washington D.C. had automatic voter registration (AVR) as of January 2022. When data was available, states with AVR showed an increase in voter participation (see <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/automatic-voter-registration.aspx>). As secretary of state, we will advocate for more accessible voting while still maintaining safe and secure voting. Moving toward AVR should be seriously discussed with voters and the Indiana General Assembly.

Same-day voter registration: Our goal is to raise civic participation in our elections. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), 23 states and Washington D.C. have Same-Day Registration (SDR) as of this year. All SDR states require that voters who register and vote on Election Day present documentation to verify their identity. When data was available, states with SDR showed some increase in voter participation with no conclusive evidence of whether SDR shaped partisan outcomes or whether certain populations were more likely to benefit (*see* <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/same-day-registration.aspx>). As Secretary of State, we will advocate for more accessible voting, while still maintaining safe and secure voting. Moving toward SDR should be seriously discussed with voters and the Indiana General Assembly.

Longer voting hours: Indiana is only one of two states that closes its polling places at 6 p.m. on Election Day. Extending those hours would give people greater opportunity to vote, especially working families. We would advocate longer poll hours to match other states' hours, while also working with county clerks to meet the challenges of recruiting poll workers.

Making Election Day a state holiday: Yes, to increase both accessibility at the polls and the spirit of civic engagement.

How healthy is civic literacy in Indiana? What would you do, as secretary of state, to improve Hoosiers' civic literacy?

Answer: Referencing our first answer that Indiana ranks 46th in registered voter turnout, Indiana could do more to improve voter engagement, like (increasing) knowledge about who is on the ballot, and when elections will be conducted, and increasing voting accessibility. We have tools in the secretary of state's office already to increase the visibility of elections and it's a responsibility of all of us to conduct elections in a way that Hoosiers feel heard. Additionally, there is underutilized programming, like Hoosier Hall Pass, within the secretary of state's office that should be more actively engaging youth. Lastly, opportunities can be provided through civically engaging the electorate and gathering feedback through advisory councils (e.g., non-profit and business led voter outreach, college student initiatives, etc.) to the office.

What is "ballot security" and what, if anything, should Indiana do to safeguard it?

Answer: The arguments around securing our voting systems are too focused on superfluous security measures at the expense of maintaining a system that is "free and fair" for all qualified and eligible voters. We can strike that balance and maintain free and secure elections. My Republican and Libertarian opponents want to implement a costly and chaotic 92-county system to audit elections. Our county clerks, both Republican and Democratic, are doing a fine job conducting elections and need our support to solve real issues rather than create a more burdensome process.

Is voter fraud a concern for you? If so, please give an example of voter fraud in Indiana.

Answer: Voter fraud is not widespread in our state. There are instances where errors occur, but in speaking with election experts, both administrators and attorneys, no one can provide a sizable example of voter fraud that warrants the costs that would stem from audits of elections. Election workers conduct elections on a bi-partisan basis. Any time ballots are handled or a voter is checked in, a Republican and a Democrat must be present. Isolated incidents of voter fraud can be a person being registered at an address that isn't his or her address. The most high-profile instance of that is when Charlie White, a previous Republican secretary of state, registered at an address where he didn't live.

Do you believe Joe Biden was legitimately elected U.S. president?

Answer: Yes, President Joe Biden was legitimately elected in 2020.

[A recent study](#) found Indiana ranks 51st for the strength of its campaign finance laws. As chief election officer, what changes, if any, would you make to those laws?

Answer: Indiana really is the wild-wild west when it comes to campaign finance – my opponent purchased a \$43,000 vehicle with donor money. I would work with the Indiana General Assembly to strengthen campaign finance laws. I think we can tighten reporting requirements and create a database that is more usable for campaigns. We can also use more innovative technology that provides the ability to search and see who is financing the campaigns of candidates, increasing campaign finance transparency. It is a matter of how we prioritize our efforts within the office – campaign finance administration will be a priority.

[A Tufts study](#) that came out right before the 2020 election showed Indiana with a steep drop in 18-19-year-old registrants from 2016. What would you do to promote registration and turnout among the youngest Hoosier voters?

Answer: When Indiana imposed strict voter ID requirements, we required a state-issued photo ID with expiration date for voting. An exception was made to allow that ID to be issued by universities, but it also had to include a photo and expiration date. So students at IU or Purdue or Ball State could in theory (some photo IDs still lack an expiration date) use their

college-issued ID, but students at Hanover, Notre Dame, or the University of Indianapolis cannot. That doesn't make sense. We also have made it confusing for students to know where they can and can't register, so often students just choose not to register at their campus. Voting is a habit we develop and when we discourage the ability of young people to participate, we start them out on a lifetime of not participating.

Do you think the ways the congressional, state House and state Senate maps have been drawn inhibits voter turnout? If so, how would you address this as secretary of state?

Answer: Too often, voters feel like their representatives in government have already been chosen for them and that discourages their participation. I'll be a constant advocate for non-partisan redistricting when maps are redrawn in 2031.

Do you think some Indiana elective offices should be appointed or, if elected, be nonpartisan? If so, which ones?

Answer: I don't think offices should be appointed because that centralizes power in fewer and fewer hands and will lead to the opposite result we seek – even lower participation.

Should the secretary of state, who oversees elections, be elected on a partisan basis (as is now the case)? Why or why not?

Answer: Our process for electing the secretary of state is appropriate. I'm the only pro-democracy candidate on the ballot for secretary of state this year, and it's vitally important that we maintain our democracy in the next few years or we run the risk of losing it.