

The Case for Nonpartisan Election Overseers

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Dan Schnur announcing his candidacy for California secretary of state in January.
Associated Press

Think Tank is Capital Journal's home for outside analysis from policy and political thinkers.

The Wall Street Journal's Beth Reinhard reports that [secretary-of-state positions are the latest front in election war](#). Both parties see an advantage in controlling the offices that oversee election law and voting, especially in swing states such as Ohio, Colorado and Iowa.

The 2000 presidential election, which came down to questionable and very partisan vote counting and legal challenges in Florida, is a perfect example of why election administration should be nonpartisan.

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At a time of tremendous public disaffection and mistrust in U.S. political leaders and government, elections must be administered in a scrupulously fair, competent and nonpartisan way, and we should be encouraging more people to participate in the political process—not making it harder to vote.

Republican efforts to enforce stricter voter ID laws in states such as North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Texas have sparked hostility largely because they would make it harder for elderly, young and minority voters to cast ballots. Such people are most likely to lack the documents required to obtain an approved ID and, as a group, are less likely to vote Republican.

A potential bright spot amid this partisan push is in California, where **Dan Schnur** is running as a nonpartisan, independent candidate for secretary of state and stressing the need for nonpartisan election administration. Mr. Schnur is a former Republican and director of the Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics at the University of Southern California. He has proposed new anti-corruption and fundraising laws for politicians and was a founder of the reform project that resulted in the creation of California's citizen legislative redistricting commission.

Access to voting should not be a partisan issue; it's a constitutional right. Election administration shouldn't be political either.

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