

Trump fires members of bipartisan elections commission

Story by Patrick Marley , The Washington Post
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President Donald Trump dismantled a long-standing bipartisan elections board Thursday, four months before a midterm contest that will determine which party controls Congress.

Trump dismissed members of the Elections Assistance Commission less than two weeks after the Supreme Court gave the president broad leeway to reshape boards that were designed to be independent. Congress created the panel to strengthen and secure elections in response to the challenges of the 2000 contest and structured it so no more than two of its four members belong to the same political party.

Trump's actions weaken the commission, which is responsible for maintaining the federal voter registration form and certifying electronic voting equipment. New appointees would need to be confirmed by the Republican-controlled Senate.

The move is the latest in Trump's broad effort to exert authority over elections as he falsely claims the 2020 election was stolen from him. Trump has spent years casting doubts on elections and pushed to limit the use of mail ballots and voting machines.

In recent months, Trump has sought to overhaul how the midterm elections will be run, in part by directing the commission to redesign a form so that people would have to provide proof of citizenship to register to vote. Many of Trump's actions on elections, including his attempt to change the form, have been thwarted by courts.

The White House said the president "reserves the right to remove individuals that may not be totally aligned with the important task of securing America's elections and ensuring every legal vote is counted." It did not say whether he planned to name replacements and when he might do so.

Late last month, the Supreme Court [ruled Trump could fire a Democratic member of the Federal Trade Commission](#) in a decision that gave presidents broad powers to determine who controls federal agencies. The ruling was tempered by a separate decision that came the same day that [prevented Trump from dismissing a member of the Federal Reserve Board](#). His latest actions could prompt new litigation and determine the extent of the president's authority.

Trump on Thursday fired the two Democratic members of the elections commission, Thomas Hicks and Benjamin Hovland, and accepted the resignation of a Republican member, Christy McCormick. The other Republican member, Donald Palmer, resigned this spring.

Despite the firings, the commission's staff can certify voting equipment, disburse funds and maintain the federal voter registration form, according to the Institute for Responsive Government, a nonprofit group aimed at making government more accessible. The staff cannot establish new policies or guidelines without commissioners, the group said.

Trump's move "is a blatant part of his plan to politicize our elections," said Sen. Alex Padilla (California) and Rep. Joe Morelle (New York). The two are top Democratic members of committees that oversee election policies.

"Americans deserve elections that are safe, secure, and run free from political interference — not overseen by partisan loyalists and election deniers beholden to Trump," they said in a statement.