



Clinton Claims Victory but Arizona's Voting Fiasco Dubbed « National Disgrace »

Shuttered polling places, endless lines, and widespread disenfranchisement—particularly for minority communities

Par [Lauren McCauley](#)

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Something was amiss in Arizona on Tuesday. As Hillary Clinton [claimed](#) victory in the state's Democratic primary, thousands of voters were left out to dry, with shuttered polling places, endless lines, and widespread reports of disenfranchisement.

In Maricopa County, which includes the capital Phoenix, voters [waited](#) up to five hours to cast a ballot after the County Elections Office slashed the number of polling sites from 200 in 2012 to just 60 this year. As the state's most populous county, this amounted to more than 20,000 voters for every available polling location.

Notably, many Latino areas were left with either just one or no polling places. Maricopa County Recorder Helen Purcell defended that decision, saying, « we looked at an area, and factored into that how many early ballots we usually get in that area and how many people normally vote at the polls. We didn't look at it as legislative districts. We looked at the overall picture of our voters. »

In response, *Arizona Central* columnist Elvia Diaz [wrote](#),

« So, it is no coincidence many poor and predominantly Latino areas didn't get a polling place. Purcell and her staff figured few of them vote anyway. She just decided to discount them. Really. »

And despite the sizable turnout, major news networks, including *CNN*, called the race just minutes after polls closed while many voters would still wait hours before even casting a ballot.

Bernie Sanders' campaign manager, Jeff Weaver, expressed frustration over the early call. « I'm not predicting victory, but I'm not predicting defeat, either, » he [told](#) *CNN*. « I mean, we have to wait and see 'til the votes are counted. »

The Arizona Democratic Party is also investigating [reports](#) that numerous Democratic voters were mistakenly identified as « independent » in the voter database, which would exclude them from the closed primary. Many of the misidentified voters were given provisional ballots, which may not have even been counted.

As the *Phoenix New Times* [reports](#),

« the day was so hectic, that as it became clear Clinton won, Sanders supporter Sheila Ryan said she just couldn't believe it: 'What about all the provisional ballots? What about all the ballots from [people still in line]? Are those getting counted?' »

What's more, just days before the vote, the state's Republican Governor Doug Ducey signed a law making « felony for anyone but a family member, roommate, caregiver, postal worker or elections official to collect early ballots, » the *Associated Press* [reported](#). The new law made it « nearly impossible for voter-outreach groups to collect and drop off early ballots. »

As University of Florida professor Michael McDonald [pointed out](#), Arizona is one of the states that would have required federal approval to alter its voting laws until the Supreme Court [gutted](#) the Voting Rights Act in 2013.

Stood in line a long time to vote? Perhaps you now better understand significance of [#SCOTUS](#) nomination battle <https://t.co/Lp1Fo4DhuJ>

— Michael McDonald (@ElectProject) [March 23, 2016](#)

As Sanders supporter Patti Serrano told the *Phoenix New Times*, « I think there's voter suppression going on, and it is obviously targeting particular Democrats. Many working - class people don't have the privilege to be able to stand in line for three hours. »

There were other issues too. A number of polling places reportedly ran out of ballots while four locations in Tucson received bomb threats [forcing](#) at least one to evacuate.

The disenfranchisement did not escape the attention of others, either, including Sanders himself.

It's a national disgrace that people have to wait hours to cast a vote in any election.

— Bernie Sanders (@BernieSanders) [March 23, 2016](#)

Arizona officials manufactured an election mess. They reduced the # of polling places & were entirely unprepared for a high-turnout primary.

— John Nichols (@NicholsUprising) [March 23, 2016](#)

Ultimately, Clinton was credited with winning 57.8 percent of the vote to Sanders' 39.8 percent. But more than have 36,000 people signed a White House [petition](#) calling on the Obama administration to investigate the voter fraud and suppression in Arizona.

Articles Par : [Lauren McCauley](#)

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