

Illegal Voter Registration Appears to Be a Serious Problem

[Via the Washington Times](#):

A large number of non-citizen Hispanics, as many as 2 million, were illegally registered to vote in the U.S., according to a nationwide poll.

The National Hispanic Survey provides additional evidence for use by anti-voter fraud conservatives and bolsters an analysis by professors at [Old Dominion University](#) who say non-citizens registered and voted in potentially large numbers.

President [Trump](#) has announced he will appoint a task force on voter fraud headed by Vice President Mike Pence. He says he wants the investigation to focus on inaccurate voter registration rolls, which are maintained by the states and the District of Columbia.

“It is a fact and you will not deny it, that there are massive numbers of non-citizens in this country who are registered to vote,” [White House](#) adviser [Stephen Miller](#) told ABC News. “That is a scandal. We should stop the presses.”

The little-noticed Hispanic survey was conducted in June 2013 by McLaughlin and Associates to gauge the opinions of U.S. resident Latinos on a wide range of issues.

A link to the National Hispanic Survey referenced by the *Times* can be [found here](#).

A few things to consider.

First, no matter how one slices the data, Trump's claim that up to 5 million people *voted* illegally in the 2016 presidential election is not tenable. Even if one accepts the highest estimates of non-citizen Hispanics registered to vote (2.2 million) and extrapolated the data to the estimated 8.3 million non-Hispanic non-citizen adults living in the U.S., one would still find voter registrations short of 5 million, let alone actual votes cast. Trump most likely was confusing voter registration with voter turnout when he said 5 million (and using the friendliest estimates), a figure he has since backed off from.

Second, media [point out](#) that scholars are skeptical of the methodology used by Old Dominion University professors Jesse Richman and David Earnest to reach [the conclusion](#) that 14 percent of non-citizens had registered to vote. Rebuttals can be found ([here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). However, the nationwide National Hispanic Survey would seem to support the conclusion reached by Richman and Earnest.

Where do we go from here?

Pundits like George Stephanopoulos seem eager to keep the narrative on the figure Trump originally cited (go to the 14:50 mark in the clip below). This seems to be a bit of a red herring.

As scholars Richman and Earnest argued in [a Washington Post article](#) based on their research, even relatively low numbers of illegally cast ballots can have a profound impact on elections.

Because non-citizens tended to favor Democrats (Obama won more than 80 percent of the votes of non-citizens in the 2008 CCES sample), we find that this participation was large enough to plausibly account for Democratic victories in a few close elections. Non-citizen votes could have given Senate Democrats the pivotal 60th vote needed to overcome filibusters in order to pass health-care reform and other Obama administration priorities in the 111th Congress. Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.) won election in 2008 with a victory margin of 312 votes. Votes cast by just 0.65 percent of Minnesota non-citizens could account for this margin. It is also possible that non-citizen votes were responsible for Obama's 2008 victory in North Carolina. Obama won the state by 14,177 votes, so a turnout by 5.1 percent of North Carolina's adult non-citizens would have provided this victory margin.

If there is compelling evidence that even hundreds of

thousands of non-citizens—not millions— are registered to vote, that would seem worthy of a federal investigation. Not only does illegal voting sway elections, it [undermines confidence](#) in our democratic institutions.

Donald Trump has a troubling tendency to say absurd and inaccurate things. That fact should not belie evidence that suggests illegal voter registration might be far more prevalent than many people would like to admit.