

How can we ensure that people get their say?

Published: January 23, 2026, 8:04 am

As Heather Cox Richardson notes in her Letters from an American [post on Substack](#) this morning:

A new poll out today from the New York Times and Siena University shows that nearly two thirds of Americans, 63%, disapprove of how ICE is handling its job, while only 36% approve. Even among white Americans, 57% disapprove, while only 42% approve. Sixty-one percent of Americans, including 19% of Republicans, think that ICE agents have gone too far.

She is undoubtedly right to draw attention to this. My question is, will it matter? After all, what chance is there of an election where these opinions might be expressed on vatong papers dropped into a ballot box, or registered on a voting machine, US style?

Let's be serious about this. When Trump can justify almost any action by declaring a national emergency, all of which exists only in his mind, and those of the acolytes who are using him to advance their fascist agenda, why won't there be an emergency this autumn sufficient for him to at least attempt to cancel the mid-term elections?

And woe betide any state that decides to hold them anyway. The cost in terms of withdrawn Federal subsidies will be very high. This is another of those previously unknown weapons that Trump has now made his own by choice.

Opinion in the USA matters, of course. The challenge it now faces is how to relate that opinion to a change in political incumbents, as it now seems very likely that its democracy is already being consigned to its past.

And we should take note. Opinion here is rarely reflected in election outcomes, which always exaggerate results, both for good and for bad. Before we sneer at the States and pretend it is another country with problems all its own, what are we going to do to deliver effective democracy?

Might this be amongst the greatetst challenge of our times? How can we ensure that people get their say when right now that appears to be one of the hardest political

goals to achieve?