



## Need Your Help

Guest columnist Tom Lubnau writes, "No matter how good Secretary of State Chuck Gray's intentions are, he should not take short cuts that deal with our fundamental rights. We did not elect an Election King."



Tom Lubnau

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Ronald Reagan once said, "The nine most terrifying words in the English language are 'I'm here from the government and I'm here to help you.'" So, when I see the Secretary of State trying to single-handedly tinker with a citizen's most precious right – the right to vote -- I have to say, thanks but no thanks.

The right to vote should not rest in one person's hands.

Wyoming's founding fathers were careful in designing our state's government. They divided the power of the state government into three distinct departments with checks and balances.



The legislature is in charge of passing laws. Wyoming Statute 22-2-103 says the Secretary of State is “the chief election officer for the state and shall maintain uniformity in the application and operation of the election laws in Wyoming.”

What that statute does not say is the Wyoming Secretary of State has the authority to pass regulations which modify or restrict the ability of citizens to vote in Wyoming.

No matter the motivation or the good cause, Wyoming has a time-tested system for vetting new laws. The system is called the legislative process. A bill has to be introduced.

Then, it is reviewed by a committee in the house of origin. Then, it goes through three separate readings. Then, the bill goes to the other house, where it goes to committee and then has three separate readings. Then, the bill goes to the Governor for signature.

The purpose of this arduous process is to analyze the new law from many perspectives and solicit input from anyone affected. Newt Gingrich taught in his course on American Government the process of passing a bill is hard, because it should be hard.

Passing a bill affects rights of citizens, and before those rights are limited or modified, the law should be vetted by an arduous legislative process.

Secretary Gray is trying to short circuit that process with his new proof of residency regulations.

No matter how good his intentions are, he should not take short cuts that deal with our fundamental rights. We did not elect an Election King.

We elected a Secretary of State, who is bound by the constitutional requirements of separation of powers. He resides in the executive branch, now, whose job it is to administer the laws passed by the legislature.

He is no longer a lawmaker. If he wanted to make laws, he should go back to the legislative branch.

The Wyoming Legislature has already defined by statute what identification is required to vote. Those requirements are found in Wyoming Statute 22-3-104. Nothing in that statute gives the Secretary of State the right to augment or enhance those requirements. Any attempt to do so should be strongly rebuffed.



When we allow the Secretary of State to restrict the right to the ballot box, we find ourselves on a slippery slope.

The next step will be to restrict the right of candidates to get on the ballot based on a political purity test. (I've heard that exact conversation at political party meetings.)

We have to guard our rights jealously. We cannot let them slip away through apathy or good intentions.

We have a legislative process for a reason, and we cannot let anyone, elected official or despot, tinker with our rights – no matter the purported good intentions.

Secretary Gray's proposed regulations changing our access to the voting booth should be rejected. If any change is to be made, it should be made through the legislative process – not unilaterally by an executive branch official.

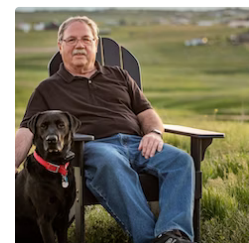
I don't care if Secretary Gray is here to "help" me. He's from the government and his attempt to circumvent the legislative process and tinker with the right to vote should be stopped.

*Tom Lubnau served in the Wyoming Legislature from 2005 - 2015 and is a former Speaker of the House.*

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