

The Incumbency Fraud

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“There’s nothing that shortening the period by which people can vote early does to combat any perceived fraud,” Democratic Party attorney Marc Elias said Sunday on NBC’s *Meet the Press*. “It’s really just a cover for what they’re really trying to do, which is to make it harder to vote.”

At issue is a new law courtesy of Iowa Republicans, along with numerous bills pending in other states, addressing what Republicans call “election integrity” and Democrats call “voter suppression.”

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Host Chuck Todd informed viewers that a poll found two-thirds of Floridians wanted more early voting days. Not fewer.

Hardly surprising, since that’s easiest for voters. And while voting should be easy, ease is not the *only* consideration.

The Iowa “law shortens the early voting period to 20 days from the current 29,” the *Associated Press* reported, “just three years after Republicans



reduced the period from 40 days.”

Here’s why I support that change, though it would be better even shorter*:

- We should vote together. Not weeks apart. With three, four, six weeks of early voting, election day ballots can be cast with a different set of facts than those cast so many weeks earlier.
- The longer the time during which ballots are cast, the greater the expense in running for office. Candidates must be in touch when voters make their decisions. Since incumbents hold an average four-to-one spending advantage over challengers, more expensive campaigns give incumbents an even greater advantage.

So, while early voting doesn’t *cause* fraud, by making elections more expensive it fosters what we might call “the incumbency fraud.”

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.

* One provision in H.R. 1, which passed the U.S. House on a party-line vote, requires that states allow *at least* 15 days of early voting. The overall bill is terrible; plus, we are better off with the states as laboratories of democracy, rather than marionettes of Washington. But my preference would be *not more than* 15 days.