

WHY THE PRESIDENT CAN'T NATIONALIZE ELECTIONS

During an interview on February 2, 2026, President Trump discussed the idea of increased federal involvement in elections, [urging his allies](#) to “nationalize the voting.” The next day, he elaborated that if states “can’t count the votes legally and honestly, then somebody else should take over” and said that “the federal government should get involved.” These comments, coming in the wake of recent federal actions in [Georgia](#) and [Minnesota](#), have prompted renewed questions about the federal government’s authority over election administration. However, under current law, the president and the federal government do not have the authority to nationalize elections. Here’s why:

THE CONSTITUTION

The primary barrier on any federal takeover of election administration is the United States Constitution.

- **State Authority Over Elections:** Under [Article I, Section 4](#) (The Elections Clause), the authority to regulate the “times, places and manner” of holding elections is given to state legislatures. Congress may “alter” those rules, but does not have independent authority to govern or run elections.
 - **No Federal Executive Authority:** The role of the executive branch in elections is [limited](#) to enforcing federal laws passed by Congress. The president cannot legally direct the counting of ballots or assume responsibility for [election administration](#) by executive action.
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DECENTRALIZED ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Second, the United States election system is one of the most [decentralized](#) in the world, with more than 8,000 local jurisdictions. In addition to the legal reasons above, the federal government could not practically take over election administration. This structure is a feature, not a bug, providing several key protections:

- **Local Expertise and Accountability:** Elections are run by people in and of the communities where they are taking place: civil servants and local volunteers who understand the geographic and logistical needs of their specific communities. The U.S. is huge and not a monolith; the needs of smaller communities in Alaska, Idaho, and Maine are very different from the needs of large jurisdictions in Dallas, Loudoun County, and Miami.
 - **Oversight:** Every state has its own [system](#) of checks and balances, including bipartisan observers and post-election audits that are conducted at the local level, ensuring transparency closer to the voters themselves.
 - **Resilience Against Cyber Threats:** A single, nationalized system would create a central point of failure. Decentralization makes it nearly impossible for a bad actor to disrupt the entire national result with a single hack.
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BOTTOM LINE

The law and practical reality agree: the president and the federal government cannot take over running American elections.