

## **Key problem with remote vote: It cannot ensure a secret ballot**

Re “Universal mail-in voting could cost \$30m in Nov., report says” (Metro, May 6): Matt Stout explains some consequences of voting by mail, and I write to add a crucial one: The all-mail vote cannot ensure a secret ballot, which is the cornerstone of democracy.

Much mail voting takes place at the kitchen table, with family members filling out their ballots together. The elderly and disabled cast their votes alongside their caretakers.

The more timid or needy or financially dependent family members, and those in nursing homes, will often follow the advice or expectations of those on whom they depend in order to gain sympathy or favor or to avoid conflict, intimidation, ridicule, or dislike.

When voters expect their vote to be revealed, some of them vote differently. Even the slightest doubt about secrecy will affect their choices. Many people are unwilling to bear the potential social costs associated with having their private political preferences revealed.

The United States, international organizations, and election observers have fought for decades around the world to make sure that women, dutiful sons and daughters, the elderly, and the disabled may all vote in privacy, without a husband or family head looking over their shoulder, because such a circumstance cancels the free and honest expression of a voter's convictions.

Voting online or by mail may increase turnout, but it skews the result.

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