

NEWS EXCLUSIVE

Confessions of a voter fraud: I was a master at fixing mail-in ballots

By Jon Levine

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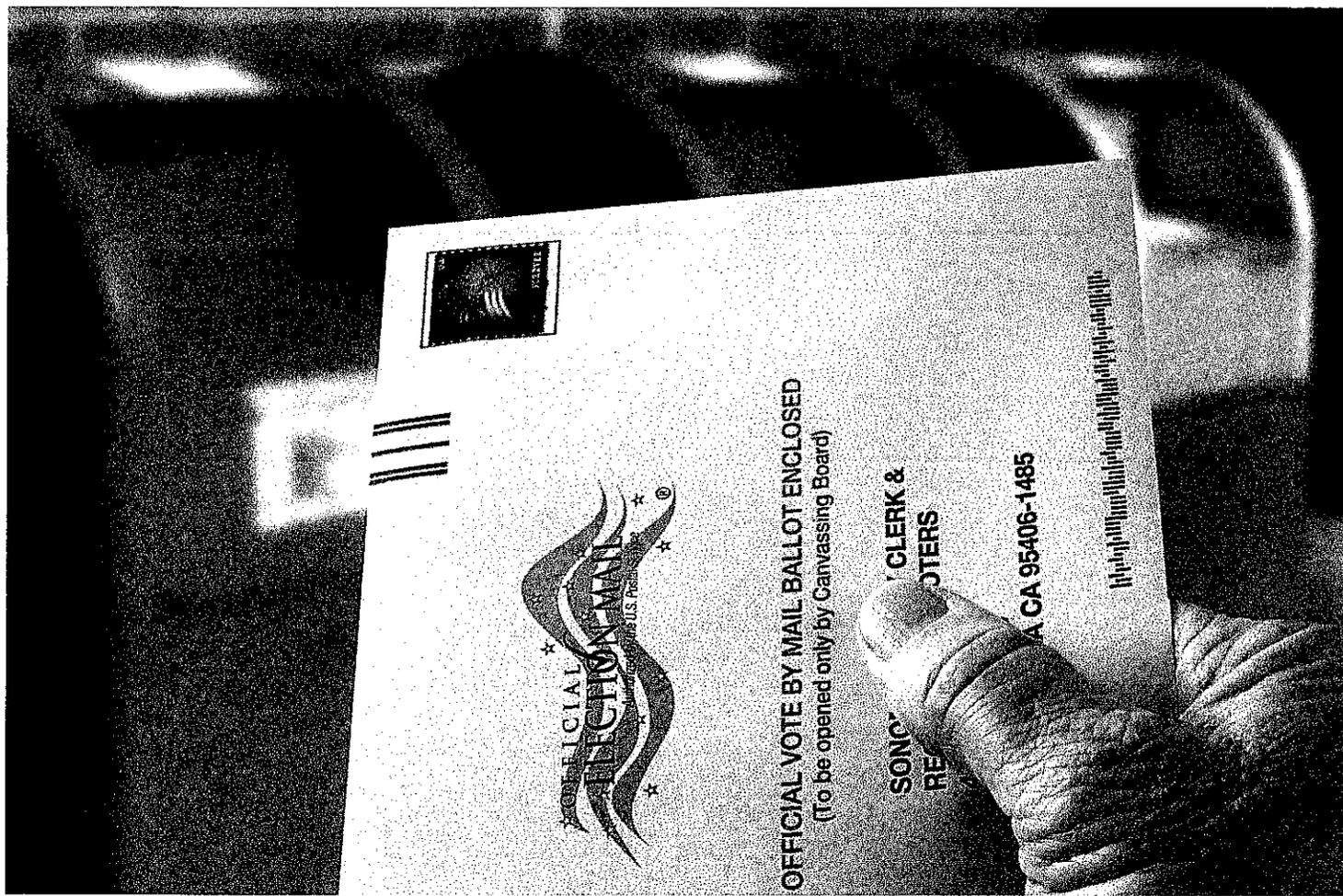
A top Democratic operative says voter fraud, especially with mail-in ballots, is no myth. And he knows this because he's been doing it, on a grand scale, for decades.

Mail-in ballots have become the latest flashpoint in the 2020 elections. While President Trump and the GOP warn of widespread manipulation of the absentee vote that will swell with COVID polling restrictions, many Democrats and their media allies have dismissed such concerns as unfounded.

But the political insider, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he fears prosecution, said fraud is more the rule than the exception. His dirty work has taken him through the weeds of municipal and federal elections in Paterson, Atlantic City, Camden, Newark, Hoboken and Hudson County and his fingerprints can be found in local legislative, mayoral and congressional races across the Garden State. Some of the biggest names and highest office holders in New Jersey have benefited from his tricks, according to campaign records The Post reviewed.

"An election that is swayed by 500 votes, 1,000 votes — it can make a difference," the tipster said. "It could be enough to flip states."

The whistleblower — whose identity, rap sheet and long history working as a consultant to various campaigns were confirmed by The Post — says he not only changed ballots himself over the years, but led teams of fraudsters and mentored at least 20 operatives in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania — a critical 2020 swing state.



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“There is no race in New Jersey — from city council to United States Senate — that we haven’t worked on,” the tipster said. “I worked on a fire commissioner’s race in Burlington County. The smaller the race, the easier it is to do.”

A Bernie Sanders die-hard with no horse in the presidential race, he said he felt compelled to come forward in the hope that states would act now to fix the glaring security problems present in mail-in ballots.

“This is a real thing,” he said. “And there is going to be a f—king war coming November 3rd over this stuff ... If they knew how the sausage was made, they could fix it.”

Mail-in voting can be complicated — tough enough that 84,000 New Yorkers had their mailed votes thrown out in the June 23 Democratic presidential primary for incorrectly filling them out.

But for political pros, they’re a piece of cake. In New Jersey, for example, it begins with a blank mail-in ballot delivered to a registered voter in a large envelope. Inside the packet is a return envelope, a “certificate of mail in voter” which the voter must sign, and the ballot itself.

That’s when the election-rigger springs into action.

Phony ballots

The ballot has no specific security features — like a stamp or a watermark — so the insider said he would just make his own ballots.

“I just put [the ballot] through the copy machine and it comes out the same way,” the insider said.

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But the return envelopes are “more secure than the ballot. You could never recreate the envelope,” he said. So they had to be collected from real voters.



Bloomberg via Getty Images

He would have his operatives fan out, going house to house, convincing voters to let them mail completed ballots on their behalf as a public service. The fraudster and his minions would then take the sealed envelopes home and hold them over boiling water.

“You have to steam it to loosen the glue,” said the insider.

He then would remove the real ballot, place the counterfeit ballot inside the signed certificate, and reseal the envelope.

“Five minutes per ballot tops,” said the insider.

The insider said he took care not to stuff the fake ballots into just a few public mailboxes, but sprinkle them around town. That way he avoided the attention that foiled a sloppy voter-fraud operation in a Paterson, NJ, city council race this year, where 900 ballots were found in just three mailboxes.

“If they had spread them in all different mailboxes, nothing would have happened,” the insider said.

Inside jobs

The tipster said sometimes postal employees are in on the scam.

“You have a postman who is a rabid anti-Trump guy and he’s working in Bedminster or some Republican stronghold ... He can take those [filled-out] ballots, and knowing 95% are going to a Republican, he can just throw those in the garbage.”

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In some cases, mail carriers were members of his “work crew,” and would sift ballots from the mail and hand them over to the operative.

In 2017, more than 500 mail-in ballots in New York City never arrived to the Board of Elections for races that November — leaving hundreds disenfranchised. They eventually were discovered in April 2018. “For some undetermined reason, some baskets of mail that were bound to the New York City Board of Elections were put off to the side at the Brooklyn processing facility,” city elections boss Michael Ryan said at the time of discovery.

Nursing homes

Hitting up assisted-living facilities and “helping” the elderly fill out their absentee ballots was a gold mine of votes, the insider said.

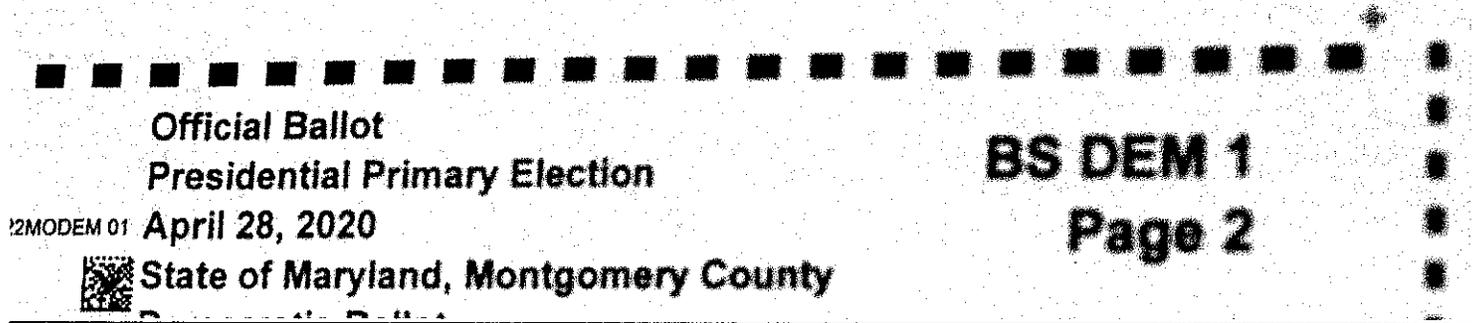
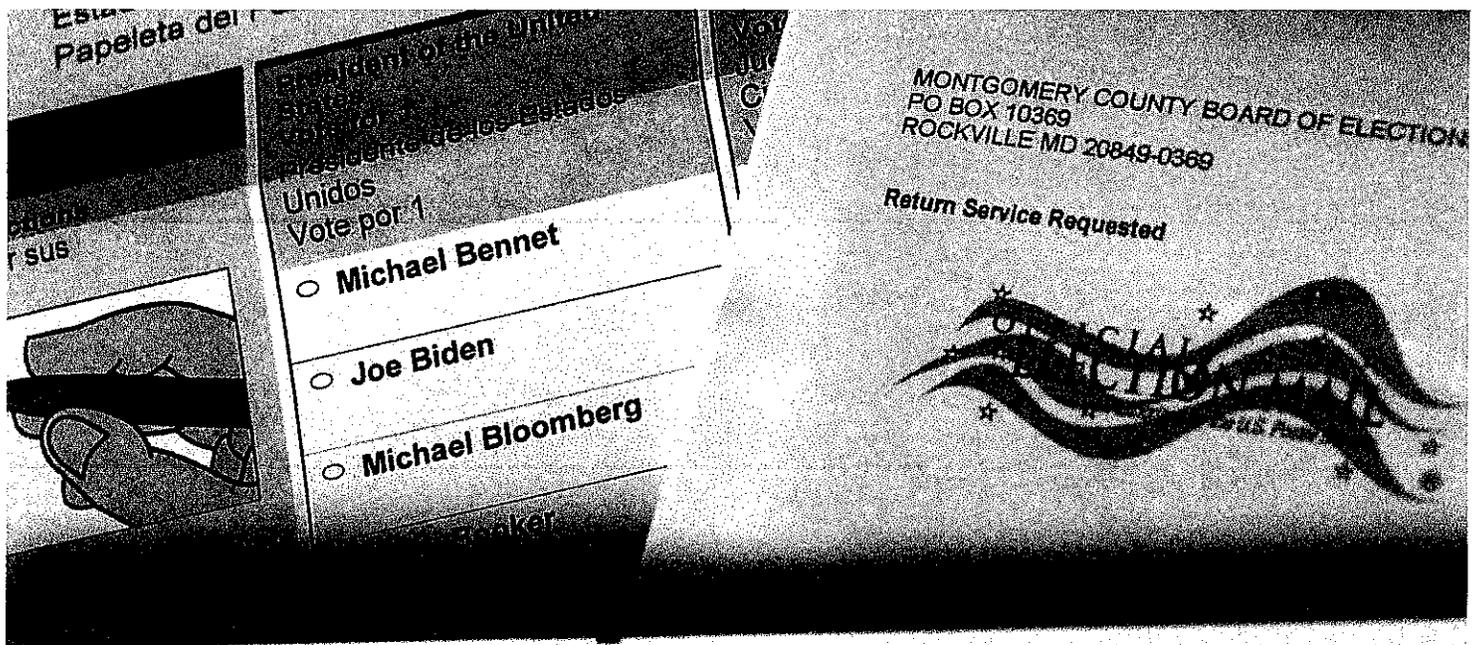
“There are nursing homes where the nurse is actually a paid operative. And they go room by room by room to these old people who still want to feel like they’re relevant,” said the whistleblower. “[They] literally fill it out for them.”

The insider pointed to former Jersey City Mayor Gerald McCann, who was sued in 2007 after a razor-thin victory for a local school board seat for allegedly tricking “incompetent ... and ill” residents of nursing homes into casting ballots for him. McCann denied it, though he did admit to assisting some nursing home residents with absentee ballot applications.

Voter impersonation

When all else failed, the insider would send operatives to vote live in polling stations, particularly in states like New Jersey and New York that do not require voter ID. Pennsylvania, also for the most part, does not.

The best targets were registered voters who routinely skip presidential or municipal elections — information which is publicly available.



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“You fill out these index cards with that person’s name and district and you go around the city and say, ‘You’re going to be him, you’re going to be him,’” the insider said of how he dispatched his teams of dirty-tricksters.

At the polling place, the fake voter would sign in, “get on line and ... vote,” the insider said. The impostors would simply recreate the signature that already appears in the voter roll as best they could. In the rare instance that a real voter had already signed in and cast a ballot, the impersonator would just chalk it up to an innocent mistake and bolt.

Bribing voters

The tipster said New Jersey homeless shelters offered a nearly inexhaustible pool of reliable — buyable — voters.

“They get to register where they live in and they go to the polls and vote,” he said, laughing at the roughly \$174 per vote Mike Bloomberg spent to win his third mayoral term. He said he could have delivered the same result at a 70 percent discount — like when Frank “Pupie” Raia, a real estate developer and Hoboken nabob, was convicted last year on federal charges for paying low-income residents 50 bucks a pop to vote how he wanted during a 2013 municipal election.

Organizationally, the tipster said, his voter-fraud schemes in the Garden State and elsewhere resembled Mafia organizations, with a boss (usually the campaign manager) handing off the day-to-day managing of the mob soldiers to the underboss (him). The actual candidate was usually kept in the dark deliberately so they could maintain “plausible deniability.”

With mail-in ballots, partisans from both parties hash out and count ballots at the local board of elections — debating which ballots make the cut and which need to be thrown out because of irregularities.



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The insider said any ballots offered up by him or his operation would come with a bent corner along the voter certificate — which contains the voter signature — so Democratic Board of Election counters would know the fix was in and not to object.

“It doesn’t stay bent, but you can tell it’s been bent,” the tipster said. “Until the [certificate] is approved, the ballot doesn’t matter. They don’t get to see the ballot unless they approve the [certificate.]”

“I invented bending corners,” the insider boasted, saying once the fixed ballots were mixed in with the normal ones, the bed was made. “Once a ballot is opened, it’s an anonymous ballot.”

While federal law warns of prison sentences of up to five years, busted voter frauds have seen far less punishment. While in 2018 a Texas woman was sentenced to five years, an Arizona man busted for voting twice in the mail was given just three years’ probation. A study by the conservative Heritage Foundation found more than 1,000 instances of documented voter fraud in the United States, almost all of which occurred over the last 20 years.

“There is nothing new about these techniques,” said Hans von Spakovsky, a senior legal fellow at Heritage who manages their election law reform initiative. “Everything he’s talking about is perfectly possible.”

The city Board of Elections declined to answer Post questions on ballot security.

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