

# [***Foreign Entities Are Influencing Our Elections. We Can Stop Them | Opinion***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BKP-NVG1-DY68-10M2-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** Interference is not just possible through contributions directly to campaigns. Congress needs to bar foreign governments and organizations from being able to purchase advertisements on broadcast and cable television, as well as for online platforms.

**Body**

American elections must be decided freely and fairly by the American people. But current gaps in our campaign finance framework can and have been exploited by foreign entities to influence the outcome of a congressional race, local ballot initiative, or state issue referendum.

This national security risk is unacceptable, but fortunately, it is a problem we can solve.

A new report released by American Promise, [*The Problem of Foreign Money in* ***Politics***](https://americanpromise.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Foreign-Money-Report.pdf), provides a detailed analysis of foreign money's impact on our political system and makes the case that no election appears immune from foreign meddling. The report found that $219 million was spent by foreign entities in California in 2020 to defeat a ballot initiative, and $67 million was spent in Maine in 2021 by a Canadian government-owned provincial energy utility to defeat a single ballot measure.

The problem stretches well beyond our congressional districts and federal elections. Local elections have been targeted in the past six years by foreign corporations, seeing a massive influx of over [*$163 million*](https://www.opensecrets.org/news/reports/foreign-influenced-corporate-money) just to committees in Colorado, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New York, and Washington.

It is undeniable—foreign agents and individuals, with agendas of their own, can affect our electoral process, and by extension, our daily lives. It's up to us to put an end to it by continuing to close doors left open to foreign entities attempting to influence our elections.

We introduced the [*Stop Foreign Funds in Elections Act*](https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/3229/all-info) to prohibit any direct contributions from foreign nationals to a state or local ballot initiative, referendum, or recall election. This simple fix would ensure foreign countries, agents, or corporations cannot influence our elections or galvanize voters in ways that serve their own interests but harm Americans and their families. The bill's unanimous passage out of the House Committee on Administration in November is proof that strong bipartisan support exists in [*Congress*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/congress?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) for taking the necessary steps to restore the American people's faith in our institutions and eliminate foreign influence in our elections.

Interference is not just possible through contributions directly to campaigns. Congress needs to bar foreign governments and organizations from being able to purchase advertisements on broadcast and cable television, as well as for online platforms. With the growth in artificial intelligence (AI), deep fake videos, robocalls, audio recordings, false imagery, and more will become more realistic and readily available. If we reflect on the past two presidential elections, foreign interference was not absent, and we are not prepared for the increase in spending and technology. That past is precedent.

This is why, in addition to the Stop Foreign Funds in Elections Act, we introduced the [*Block Foreign-Funded Political Ads Act*](https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/6996) as a solution to stop the threats from occurring by requiring those selling ad space, or ad time, to verify that purchases are not made from individuals, or entities outside of the United States. Closing this gap is essential, particularly to prevent undue influence by foreign actors on social media and other digital platforms that are ripe targets for those seeking to weaken America by dividing us against one another.

Far too often, partisanship can keep Congress from taking vital action on issues that do not disproportionately affect either political party but affect the lives of every single American. Our republican form of government and democratic way of life need our protection. We do not face this threat alone, so we must come together urgently to find some common ground and common sense to stop the foreign influence on our elections.

*Brian Fitzpatrick represents Pennsylvania's 1st District.*

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*The views expressed in this article are the writers' own.*

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2365026/voting-booths-are-seen.jpg)

**Graphic**

Voting booths are seen

MARK FELIX/AFP via Getty Images

Voting booths are seen.

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