



handling voters who have problems, and a presidential election is guaranteed to deliver more than a few of those.

A woman was sitting before me with her young child. The check-in poll workers couldn't locate her in the electronic poll book. I found her with an advanced search, but in a different precinct about 15 miles and a

half hour's drive away. Then I started what I call "peeling the onion." Why was she in the wrong place? Did she move? When did she move? Was her voter registration updated correctly? I have to understand the voter's story before I can apply the law correctly. Virginia requires that you cast your ballot in the precinct where you are registered, so being in the right place is important.

She used to live in my precinct. When she moved, she updated her address with the Department of Motor Vehicles. Thanks to a new state law that took effect July 1st, her new address was forwarded to the Office of Elections, which assigned her to the new precinct. She still lives at the new address, so the solution was simple: send her to the precinct where she is registered to

vote.

I politely explained that she just needed to go home and vote at her new precinct. But she wouldn't do it. She refused to wait in line again even though lines were short by that time in the day. I was baffled. She had to drive home anyway, so going to the right precinct wouldn't be an inconvenience.

It was clear that I had lost this voter to something. She exceeded her personal reserve of patience, perhaps? I made my last-ditch effort to give her a voting experience by offering a provisional ballot, gently hinting that it would take about the same amount of time as waiting in line again. To my dismay, she chose to cast the provisional ballot, which I knew wouldn't count. She disenfranchised herself by refusing to wait a few minutes at her own precinct.

I strive to say yes to voters—to find some way for every eligible voter to cast a ballot. It broke my heart to watch this voter throw away her vote. ■

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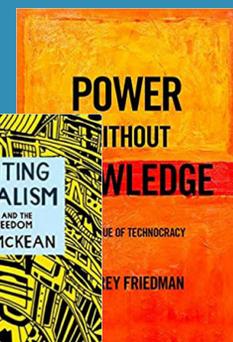
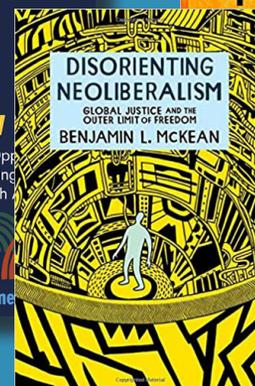
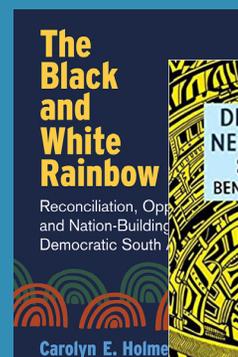
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