

## Recommended Read:

*Laboratories of Autocracy*

by David Pepper,

St. Helena Press, 2021

***Paul Froelich***

State governments are essential to our lives, our communities, and the functions of our democracy. Unfortunately, most Americans are woefully unaware of how state government works and pay little attention. Yet state legislatures are currently under nationwide attack from Republicans.

David Pepper's book *Laboratories of Autocracy* is an important exploration of the Republicans' continuing autocratic campaign to take over state governments, viewed particularly through the lens of the state of Ohio. Pepper writes how Ohio gained the title of "most corrupt state," and how Republican legislators in other states are emulating the unethical means used in Ohio to install minority rule for generations to come. Pepper methodically documents the many tactics Republicans are using to marginalize minority and other voters through un-democratic methods such as surgically precise gerrymandering. He describes efforts to limit polling centers to increase election lines, passing ill-

intentioned voter ID laws, reducing early voting, closing drive-through ballot boxes, and restricting voting by mail, allowing for unchecked Republican power in state legislatures.

Importantly, Pepper devotes much of his book to tangible solutions for stopping this powerful Republican campaign and reviving state democracy and the necessary accountability. This book is an important clarion call for citizens and institutions to engage with their state governments and re-take control before it's too late. Democrats take notice!