



Boston Ballot Box Burning Exposes Dangers of Voting by Drop Box

Just over a week from the election, a Boston man was charged with setting a ballot drop box on fire and damaging or destroying many of the more than 120 ballots inside the drop box. The fire was set Sunday at a drop box outside the Boston Public Library in the Back Bay neighborhood of Boston.

Worldy Armand, a 39-year-old Boston resident who is described by Suffolk County District Attorney Rachael Rollins as “emotionally disturbed,” was arrested late Sunday and charged with willful and malicious burning. The FBI had said Sunday that it’s investigating. Other charges may be brought as the FBI investigation continues.

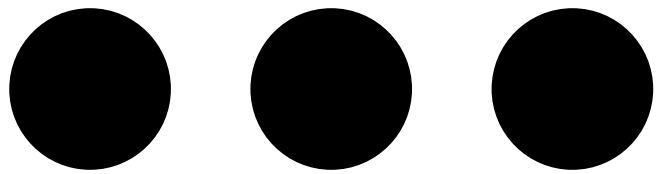
The fire was discovered just after 4 a.m. on Sunday, when officers saw smoke coming from the drop box. Officers and firefighters poured water into the box to extinguish the fire. The act of arson was captured by a nearby security camera and Armand was arrested a short time later when officers on patrol noticed him and recognized him from the photos distributed from the video. At the time of his arrest, police said he also had an active warrant for receiving stolen property.

According to a [press release](#) from the Suffolk County District Attorney’s office, Judge Mark Hart Summerville ordered Armand to be held without bail.

This is the second ballot drop box to be burned this month. Los Angeles County authorities said last week that a fire in a ballot box there is also being investigated as arson. In that [incident](#), about 100 ballots were damaged when someone placed a burning newspaper in a ballot drop box.

It does not appear that the Boston ballot burning was politically motivated. Armand is a homeless man who seems to have emotional and mental health issues. However, the investigation into the Los Angeles County incident has not yet turned up a suspect — so the motivation for that fire is unknown.

The ballot box torched Sunday contained 122 ballots at the time of the fire, according to election officials who also said that 87 of them were still legible and able to be processed. Of the 35 that were damaged by the fire, all but five to 10 of them were mostly intact and should be able to be processed manually.



RyanJLane/iStock/Getty Images Plus



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on October 28, 2020

As a reaction to the fire, Massachusetts Secretary of State Bill Galvin has instructed local officials to increase security at the sites of drop boxes — including guards and video surveillance. He has also directed them to collect the ballots from drop boxes more frequently.

Galvin called the fire a “disgrace to democracy” and said, “Our first and foremost priority is maintaining the integrity of our elections process and ensuring transparency and trust with our voters, and any effort to undermine or tamper with that process must be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.” Of course, Galvin — a Democrat — said nothing about the fact that having voters drop their ballots into drop boxes puts them at risk of just this type of tampering.

If Galvin’s “first and foremost priority” is “maintaining the integrity of our elections process,” one is left to wonder why voters are encouraged to drop ballots into boxes that are so easily accessible to anyone who wants to set one on fire or otherwise tamper with. The five to 10 voters whose ballots were just destroyed may have learned that lesson too late. If they check online, they can see that their ballots were never counted. They can then go vote again. But this writer would bet they will not likely drop their ballots into another drop box.

Voters who take seriously the blessing of choosing our leaders should demand in-person voting with ballots that are fed into a tamper-proof machine.

This writer recently took advantage of “early voting.” The location was a library near my home. As I drove up, I noticed the signs directing voters who did not wish to come inside to park in a certain area to have their ballot brought out to them. They could then place them in an outside drop box. I decided then and there that if the ballots inside were not fed into a machine immediately after they were filled out, I would wait and vote on November 3. Fortunately, they were fed into a machine. But I could not help but wonder at the people I saw placing the most important document they are likely to handle all year into a plastic box over which they have no control.

While the Boston ballot-burning appears to be the work of a deranged homeless person, it underscores just how insecure this whole election process has become. How difficult would it be for someone to know that a certain area of their city is more conservative (or more liberal) than the rest? That data is easily available online. By knowing that, they could know that the majority of ballots in drop boxes in that area are targets they would want to destroy.

Voting is both a right and a responsibility. Vote in person, if at all possible. You don’t want your vote to be missed in the counting.



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