

2016 Revisited: Electronic Balloting Favored Clinton, Paper Balloting Sanders

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Investigators call it “strange patterns in data”— that saw Hillary Clinton win primaries with electronic ballots, and Bernie Sanders victorious in paper ballot states.

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Rodolfo Cortes Barragan holds a PhD in cognitive psychology from Stanford University. He and a colleague conducted a study that turned up strange patterns in presidential electoral results in 2016. I spoke to him about the study.

Ann Garrison: Rodolfo, what were the results of your study of returns in the 2016 presidential election?

Rodolfo Cortes Barragan: We saw irregularities in vote patterns. For example, everyone knew that there were discrepancies between most exit polls and reported polls. However, we found that there were more discrepancies in states with strictly electronic voting machines. Clinton won 65%, Bernie Sanders 35% in those states. In states with paper ballots, Clinton won 49%, Sanders 51%. Voting methods vary from state to state and from county to county within states. You can go to [Verified Voting](#) to see a map of the methods used across the US. Results are most reliable in Oregon, Massachusetts, and Vermont. The absolute worst is Louisiana. Their strictly statewide electronic voting could be considered a form of voter suppression.

AG: And did you conduct that research alone or were you working with someone else?

RCB: I collaborated with Axel Geijssels, a cognitive psychologist in the Netherlands.

AG: Can you explain how you went about collecting data?

RCB: All the data we reported is publicly available. We simply merged it all together and noticed strange patterns.

AG: Did you also look into results in the states that choose delegates at caucuses rather than statewide elections? (In 2016, eight states held caucuses rather than statewide polls: Iowa, Alaska, Nevada, North Dakota, Kansas, Wyoming, Hawaii, Kentucky—Republican only, Maine, and Washington—Democratic only. For an explanation of how caucuses work, see [Business Insider](#). The process is not identical from state to state).

RCB: We did not look into caucuses because there is no publicly available data, but it's a lot more difficult to rig a caucus than a primary. A caucus is done out in the open—people engage with one another and everyone can see the outcome. People are counted visually as standing on one side of the room or the other.

"It's a lot more difficult to rig a caucus than a primary."

Occasionally, there are accusations of unfair die—meaning an unfair coin toss or other unfair means of resolving a tie by chance. Some said that coin tosses for Clinton were unfair in Iowa, but there's no publicly available data that could prove that.

AG: In 2016, however, violence erupted after a yay/nay voice vote was held at the Nevada State Democratic Convention because Clinton had been awarded 20 delegates to the national nominating convention, Sanders 15. Sanders issued a critical statement reported by Rolling Stone, in "[WTF Happened at the Nevada Democratic State Convention?](#)":

"According to various reports, Sanders supporters yelled, threw chairs and booed Clinton surrogate Barbara Boxer, incensed by a process they saw as rigged in Clinton's favor. Clinton backers responded by calling for the disruptive Sanders delegates' arrests.

"Sanders went on to denounce the way the Nevada state convention was conducted, saying [Party Chair Roberta] Lange should at the very least have held a head-count rather than a yay/nay voice vote, and accusing her of refusing to acknowledge motions from the floor or accept any petitions for amendments, in violation of the rules. Sanders also protested the disqualification, 'en mass,' of 58 of his delegates.

"'These are on top of failures at the precinct and county conventions,' Sanders said, 'including trying to depose and then threaten with arrest the Clark County convention credentials chair because she was operating too fairly.'"

With regard to the violence, Sanders said he doesn't condone any violence, but that someone had fired a shot through the window at his Nevada campaign headquarters while he was inside, and that the hotel his staff were staying in had been robbed and ransacked.

The Clinton campaign claimed that there were no irregularities, and condemned the violence at the state convention.

RCB: Yeah, that was the most raucous caucus in recent memory. It was like Nevada reverted to the Wild Wild West.

AG: Did you make any effort to share your national or statewide results with the national Democratic Party, state parties, or press?

RCB: We know that Bernie Sanders' press secretary saw our results, as well as the results of other analysts suggesting fraud, but we did not hear him comment or complain about them. Comedian Lee Camp reported our findings on [RT's Redacted Tonight](#).

AG: Do you see any electoral reform taking place anywhere that might produce results more worthy of voters' confidence?

RCB: No, the country has not moved to where it should be moving: 100% hand-counted

paper ballots. The UK uses that method and reports results in good time, but officials tell us that for some reason we can't.

AG: Both parties are likely to claim Russian interference at the ballot box if they don't get the results they want this time. Can anything like that be readily proven or disproved?

RCB: We can't prove who hacks anything, because, as Wikileaks' Vault 7 release showed, the CIA has figured out ways of covering their tracks and hiding the true origin of hacks, and it's likely that other intelligence agencies have developed the same deceptive technology. However, we can look for strange patterns in data—like Clinton's majority win in states with electronic balloting and Bernie's in states with paper ballots and stark differences between exit polls and reported polls.

AG: Why do you yourself continue to run for office, knowing how corrupt our elections are?

RCB: I think we need to think about local context. I'm running in Los Angeles County. We have never had an election fraud scandal, though we have had some terrible processes like poll workers not being trained well. We have some of the safest elections in the country, and our paper-based, hand-counted model should be instituted nationally.

The most preferable method is hand-counted paper ballots, next most preferable are paper ballots scanned by some sort of machine since there is a paper trail that can be hand-counted if a candidate with standing demands it. The least preferable method is of course purely digital voting. Votes are often tallied or scanned and tallied by machines built by unregulated private [corporations](#). We need 100% hand-counted paper ballots nationwide.

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