

America's Sham Electoral Process

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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It's bad enough to make some despots blush. It doesn't rise to the level of good fiction. No respectable film producer would accept a script explaining it. Who'd believe a democratic system so implausible. It's more fanciful than real.

Longstanding electoral fraud alone subverts democracy in America. The entire process lacks legitimacy.

Most democracies have proportionally representative (PR) governance. America's winner-take-all system lacks credibility. It's borderline lawless.

PR represents all voters and all political parties or groups proportionally to their electoral strength. Thus, if candidates from one party win 30% of the votes, they get 30% of legislative seats. Not in America. Here, 50.1% takes all.

The Electoral College constitutes another systemic flaw. It's fundamentally undemocratic. Bush v. Gore stands out. Winning the popular vote doesn't matter.

Gore, of course, also won an Electoral College majority. Final determination came months too late to matter. Gore won but never contested. Perhaps his candidacy just went along for the ride.

At the same time, it likely made no difference who won. Both candidates represented two sides of the same coin. Duopoly power runs America. Big Money owns it. Independent opposition has no chance. Voters have no say.

Sixteen times under Electoral College rules, winning presidential candidates won a minority of votes. Winner take all rules exclude runoffs. Popular favorites lose more times than people realize.

Moreover, when half the electorate opts out, presidents can be elected with as little as 25.1% of eligible voters. Even if all others rejected them, it doesn't matter.

Past elections were rife with fraud as far back as 1824. Four major candidates contested. All represented the Democratic-Republican party. Today they're called Democrats. Platforms of both major parties spurn democracy.

It's always been that way. The 1824 "Corrupt Bargain" settled things. Vote tallies produced no winner. Andrew Jackson led with 42%. John Quincy Adams was second with 32%. Two other candidates had 13% each.

In the Electoral College, Jackson was 32 short of a majority. Under the 12th Amendment, House members chose a winner from the top three candidates. Lobbying and back-room

dealmaking went on furiously.

Weeks later, Adams got the minimum Electoral College count needed to win. House galleries were outraged for good reason. Dealmakers won, not voters. Jackson should have been declared president but wasn't.

He got a second chance. He became America's seventh president. In 1828, he defeated Adams soundly. In 1832, he won another term. He bested National Republican Henry Clay decisively.

In office, he vetoed congressional legislation granting the privatized Second Bank of the United States a 20-year charter. Jefferson opposed the first US Bank. Both were 19th century versions of today's Federal Reserve.

Jackson called the Second Bank a "hydra-headed monster" for good reason. Along with other major central banks, the Fed wages financial war on humanity.

Subsequent elections were as fraudulent as the one Jackson lost. It's an American tradition. Media scoundrels don't explain.

Historian Robert Caro called Lyndon Johnson 1948 senatorial primary win the most blatant example of electoral theft in US history. Ballot fraud was rife. Johnson was behind by 20,000 votes. Final tallies showed him winning by 87.

From the 19th century to today, electoral legitimacy was sorely lacking. Today, elections are stolen with electronic ease. Corporate programmed and controlled machines vote, not people.

They choose winners, not enfranchised citizens. Undercounts and overcounts are common. Many legitimate voters are stripped from rolls. Jim Crow lives. Blacks and Latinos are most affected. Muslims are considered fifth column threats. Media scoundrels say nothing.

The 1965 Voting Rights Act was supposed to curb discriminatory practices. It prohibits states from imposing any "voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure (that may) deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color."

It also established federal enforcement procedures. Most often it doesn't matter. In addition, no national standard applies. States choose their own electoral procedures. Discriminatory exclusion continues.

So do other gross electoral irregularities. US federal, state and local elections fail the smell test. They're woefully short of free, fair, and open. Money power controls them. Last month, Jimmy Carter called America's process "one of the worst....because of the excessive influx of money."

The entire system is corrupt and dysfunctional. It has no legitimacy whatever. Presidential races constitute the apogean extreme of illegitimacy.

The [Center for Responsive Politics](#) (CRP: OpenSecrets.org) predicts a \$2.5 billion Obama/Romney contest. Combined with congressional races, it estimates \$5.8 billion. Super

PACS and other outside sources raise much of it. Donors can contribute as much as they want anonymously.

According to CRP executive director Sheila Krumholz:

“Although a lot of money still remains to be raised and spent, the data already show that we’re on track to break the extraordinary, record-setting sums spent in 2008.”

“That cycle was the first in which we crossed the \$5 billion mark, and the big question now is whether we will already reach – or surpass – \$6 billion just one cycle later.”

“At a minimum, we’ll come close. More important than the total spent, the real difference this cycle is how great a portion of that money will come from purportedly independent, often secretive groups.”

“An arms race driven by the outside money keeps incumbents and challengers alike desperately seeking funds and even more grateful to the donors that come to their aid.”

Donor-friendly legislation, deregulation, and other scurrilous practices repay contributors manyfold.

On the stump, candidates deliver prepackaged, prescribed slogans, sound bites, and other rehearsed rhetoric to win votes. Focus-tested commercials proliferate. Candidate virtues and opponents’ shortcomings are exaggerated for maximum effect.

Debates are worse. Issues are avoided. What matters most isn’t discussed. A duplicitous charade substitutes. Voters are left entirely uninformed.

Until 1988, the nonpartisan League of Women Voters ran the process. Thereafter, both major parties usurped control through their Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD). Corporate money funds it. They get what they pay for.

Independent candidates and opinions are excluded. In 2000, Green Party candidate Ralph Nader was shut out and threatened with arrest for showing up for the first debate. Having a valid auxiliary viewing room ticket didn’t matter.

So-called presidential debates constitute scripted theater. They feature prepackaged questions and answers. Issues mattering most aren’t discussed responsibly if at all.

Massachusetts state police accosted Nader. They forced him to leave under threat of arrest. CPD officials left instructions to exclude him even from a separate University of Massachusetts sponsored viewing area. Others without tickets got in unopposed.

Nader sued and achieved partial vindication. CPD co-chairs Paul Kirk and Frank Fahrenkopf apologized.

Nader calls CPD’s agenda “a deplorable, exclusionary tool of the two-party duopoly, performing an antidemocratic screening function in our system, and forcing excluded candidates to the sidelines in media attention and public appraisal.”

On October 2, [Nader](#) headlined his CounterPunch article “Rigging the Presidential Debates,” saying:

Obama and Romney control the CPD. Secret back room deals are made. Prescribed arrangements are consummated. Formats exclude debates.

Everything is negotiated in advance. If done “between two corporations, they could be prosecuted for criminal violation of the antitrust laws.”

Voters aren’t told about the “backroom” Obama/Romney “fix.”

“Of course, (independent) party candidates are excluded.” In 2000 and 2004, national polls showed most people wanted Nader included. He was threatened with arrest for even showing up to witness the charade.

“Nothing seems to motivate the mainstream campaign press into challenging the two Party duopoly, its definition of important questions, or the rancid corporate sponsorship of the debates down to the hospitality parties the corporatists hold at the debate locations in Colorado, New York and Florida this October. The reporters must like the free wine and food.”

Self-censorship is policy. Rules of engagement exclude truth and real debate. Media scoundrels have their own rules, said Nader. “(A)void pressing questions....beyond what (both) major candidates are” discussing.

“(I)gnore what major civic groups or (others) with credible track records propose for the candidates to address.”

Exclude what matters most to ordinary people. Vital issues include war and peace, corporate empowerment, crime in the suites, political corruption, public education, worker rights, health and safety, clean air and water, safe affordable food and energy, environmental protection, equity and justice, and government of, by, and for everyone.

The nation’s “foremost expert on the politics of presidential debates – George Farah, author of No Debate” can’t get on TV, corporate radio, NPR or PBS. Anyone able to explain electoral realities is excluded. So are legitimate independent voices on all major issues.

Nader said Walter Cronkite and the League of Women Voters once called CPD-controlled debates “unconscionable fraud,” “mockery,” and “charades devoid of substance, spontaneity, and honest answers to tough questions.”

On October 3, 16, and 22, media scoundrels were chosen to run cover for debate theatrics as hosts. PBS News Hour’s Jim Lehrer, CNN’s Candy Crowley, and CBS chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer lack credibility.

So does ABC News correspondent Martha Raddatz. She’ll host the October 11 vice presidential debate.

Expect no surprises. Hosts are prescribed, well-prepared, and rehearsed like candidates. Nothing is left to chance.

Political doublespeak, demagoguery, ritualistic babble, and catchy one-liners are planned. They insult more than edify. Truth and full disclosure are prohibited.

What matters most has no seat at the table. It’s always been that way. Money power and

television rules made things worse. They further corrupted an illegitimate process too dysfunctional to fix.

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