

E-Democracy in California

Viewing The Diebold Vote-Tallying Screen Prohibited

By [Global Research](#)

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Jim March, a member of the Black Box Voting board of directors, was arrested Tuesday evening for trying to observe the Diebold central tabulator (vote tallying machine) as the votes were being counted in San Diego's mayoral election (July 26). (- online discussion: <http://www.blackboxvoting.org>)

According to Jim Hamilton, an elections integrity advocate from San Diego, he and March visited the office of the registrar of elections earlier in the day. During this visit, March made two requests, which were refused by Mikel Haas, the San Diego Registrar of elections.

1) March asked that the central tabulator, the computer that tallies up the votes from all the precincts, be positioned so that citizens could observe it. According to Hamilton, this would have required simply moving a table a few feet.

2) March also asked for a copy of the ".gbf" files — the vote tally files collected during the course of tabulation to be provided for examination after the election.

During the tallying of the election, the Diebold computer was positioned too far away for citizens to read the screen. Citizens could not watch error messages, or even perceive significant anomalies or malfunctions.

Unable to see the screen, March went into the office where the tabulator was housed. Two deputies followed him and escorted him out.

According to Hamilton: "He was not belligerent, not at all. After he went inside the tabulator room he came [was escorted] out and he said clearly 'I'm not resisting.' They handcuffed him, took him out of the building. They put him in a squad car.

They're going to take him to the police station, book him and take him to jail," said Hamilton. "He's getting charged with a felony, 'interfering with an election official.'"

March's actions are the culmination of two years of increasing frustration with the refusal of election officials to respond to security deficiencies in the voting machines. The software that tallies the votes in San Diego is made by Diebold Election Systems, a company that has already paid the state of California \$2.8 million for making false claims, due to a lawsuit filed by March and Black Box Voting founder Bev Harris.

On July 4, a report was released by European computer security expert Harri Hursti, revealing that the Diebold voting system contains profound architectural flaws. "It is open for business," says Hursti, who demonstrated the flaws on Leon County, Florida Diebold machines. He penetrated the voting system in less than five minutes, manipulating vote reports in a way that was undetectable.

Despite the critical security alert issued by Hursti, San Diego County sent 713 voting machines home with poll workers, increasing the risk that the "memory cards" housed in the machines could be hacked, and removing the argument that "inside access" was carefully safeguarded.

The arrest of Jim March underlines a fundamental problem facing Americans today as, increasingly, they lose the ability to monitor, verify, or watch any part of the counting process.

The San Diego registrar of elections knew of the security flaws in the voting system. Diebold has never denied the vulnerability identified in Hursti's report, found at <http://www.blackboxvoting.org/BBVreport.pdf>.

Despite knowledge of the increased risks, Haas made the decision to create additional vulnerability by sending the machines home with hundreds of poll workers.

While San Diego officials will no doubt point to a small seal on the compartment housing the memory card (the component exploited in Hursti's study), Black Box Voting has interviewed a former San Diego poll worker, who reported that all that is necessary to dislodge and then reaffix the seal is a small pair of pliers.

in a Nutshell:

- The machines have been demonstrated to be vulnerable to undetected tampering - The San Diego registrar of voters chose not to take appropriate precautions
- The main tally machine was placed in a location that was impossible for citizens to observe
- Many voting integrity advocates have come to believe that voting machine reform now rivals the urgency of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s.

Jim March acted on those beliefs.

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