

Electronic Voting Theft: Why we fight to prevent stolen elections in 2012 and beyond

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In-depth Report: [Election Fraud in America](#)

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With election day less than a week away, the spectre of another stolen election is upon us. The airwaves and internet are at last filling with discussion of this possibility.

When the first stories were broken by a handful of us after the fiascos of Florida 2000 and Ohio 2004, there was a stunning silence, followed by a wide range of attacks. Today the warnings about the possibility of another election theft are taken with increasing gravity.

The question is deep and profound, with a huge body of research and writing surrounding it.

But among the many concerns, two are key: massive disenfranchisement, and manipulation of the electronic vote count.

DISENFRANCHISEMENT:

There is no doubt the Republican party has done much to prevent likely Democrats from voting. This “Jim/Juan Crow” strategy has included legislation aimed at requiring photo ID as a means of restricting the vote. This involves financial and other burdens that would prevent as many as ten million citizens from voting according to the Brennan Center at New York University, the vast bulk of them likely Democrats.

Though these photo ID and other restrictive laws are being overturned in some courts, it’s a virtual certainty Republican poll workers and challengers will use them—overturned or otherwise—as pretext for intimidating people away from the voting booths.

There has been massive stripping of voter rolls, often by electronic means, as was done in Florida 2000 and Ohio 2004. Much of the disenfranchisement has focused on the inner cities which, again, lean heavily Democratic. In Ohio, more than a million citizens—some 20% of the electorate—have lost their right to vote this way since 2009. The phenomenon is clearly nationwide.

Misinformation is being spread by Republican-controlled election boards about voting place locations and times and dates when the polls will be open, a tactic widely used in Ohio 2004 and elsewhere.

Threatening billboards, fliers, phone calls and more have been deployed to intimidate potential voters.

Right wing organizations such as the Tea Party, True the Vote and others have organized to work as poll workers or challengers at the polls, with the mission of discouraging potential Democrats from voting through intimidation and delay.

All these tactics are being choreographed as part of a larger strategy aimed at slashing the vote count among minorities and other target groups not only in the presidential race, but for control of Congress and statewide offices, and in key referenda over such issues as labeling GMO food, legalizing marijuana and more.

ELECTRONIC VOTE THEFT

Virtually the entire national vote count is now being conducted on electronic voting machines, which include optical scanning computers. There is one overriding reality that defines their use: the courts have ruled that their software is proprietary, and therefore in essence immune from public scrutiny. In practical terms, this means the vote counts for tens of millions of American citizens is opaque and beyond investigative or legal monitoring or recall.

As we saw in Volusia County, Florida, in 2000, and in Ohio 2004, as well as in numerous Congressional and other races, control of the electronic vote count can decide an election, and there is nothing the public can do to prove it, or to challenge the outcome through the legal system.

That a firm with deep ties to the Romney family and campaign has a major interest in a company that owns, programs, manages and tallies votes in at least four swing states that could decide the election must be a matter of concern.

Beyond Hart Intercivic, nearly all the nation's electronic voting machines are also owned, programmed, managed and tallied by firms with deep Republican ties. Among them are ES&S, Sequoia, Dominion, Triad and more. They are spread throughout the United States, and will surely control the decisive votes in many if not all key swing states.

The essential insecurity of the electronic vote count is an affront to democracy. That a theft can be done so easily—and with the overwhelming body of evidence indicating it HAS been done—means that the individual vote of any American citizen is not sacred...that it's up for grabs. No matter what margin of victory may present itself in any election, this is not acceptable. Each and every vote cast by each and every American citizen, swing state or otherwise, decisive or not, has been won with the blood of our ancestors and, in many cases, of those of us still living. Each vote cast by an American citizen has meaning, and must be protected—at all costs—by the structure of the voting process.

The “solution” to electronic election theft can never lie in building up a margin of victory sufficient to overcome stolen numbers. Massive turnouts of voters are always a great thing. But electronic votes are the ultimate fungible blind article. The process desecrates everything democracy is supposed to stand for, and is never acceptable under any circumstances.

The fact that Republicans might steal elections from Democrats and vice versa means further that the two of them together can always shut out a third or fourth party trying to mount a serious challenge to corporate power. This has in fact been done throughout American history to protect the power of the corporate structure. We now have an African-

American in the White House. But the last president who was not a Democrat or Republican was the Whig Millard Fillmore, whose term ended in 1853. As long as the vote count can be manipulated by those in power, electronically or otherwise, there is no hope for meaningful change through the ballot box.

As this year's massive electoral drama unfolds, more and more disturbing stories surface about the ease with which it could be stolen. They are to be taken with profound gravity, no matter who one favors for the presidency or other office.

The gargantuan sums of cash flowing into the process due to Citizens United and other loopholes in the system mean, simply enough, that our government is wholly owned and operated by large corporations. Systematic disenfranchisement and electronic vote theft are the cornerstones of that power.

Until we have money out of politics, abolition of the Electoral College, universal automatic voter registration and universal hand-counted paper ballots, there is no hope for real democracy in this country. As election protection advocates, activists and investigators, we urge everyone to pay very close attention to what happens in this election, to work to prevent the terrible abuses we see forthcoming, and to follow in the coming years with a powerful social movement that will deliver real democracy to this country.

Which candidate gets your vote is not our concern here. As Americans, we agree on one thing: all citizens must have their right to a ballot and to have it counted. In the long run, our one best hope for a sustainable future is the power of an fully enfranchised people.

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