Electronic Voting

Two voting companies & two brothers will count 80 percent of U.S. election using both scanners & touchscreens

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April 28, 2004—Voters can run, but they can't hide from these guys. Meet the Urosevich brothers, Bob and Todd. Their respective companies, Diebold and ES&S, will count (using *both* computerized ballot scanners and touchscreen machines) about 80 percent of all votes cast in the upcoming U.S. presidential election.

Both ES&S and Diebold have been caught installing uncertified software in their machines. Although there is no known certification process that will protect against vote rigging or technical failure, it is a requirement of most, if not all, states.

And, according to author Bev Harris in her book, *Black Box Vo*ting, " . . . one of the founders of the original ES&S (software) system, Bob Urosevich, also oversaw development of the original software now used by Diebold Election Systems."

Talk about putting all our eggs in one very bogus, but brotherly basket.

Even if states or counties hire their own technicians to re-program Diebold or ES&S software (or software from other companies), experts say that permanently installed software, called firmware, still resides inside both electronic scanners and touchscreen machines and is capable of manipulating votes. For those who are unfamiliar with the term "firmware", here's a definition by BandwidthMarket.com: "Software that is embedded in a hardware device that allows reading and executing the software, but does not allow modification, e.g., writing or deleting data by an end user."

The ability to rig an election is well within easy reach of voting machine companies. And it does not matter if the machines are scanners or touchscreens, or are networked or hooked up to modems.

So, for those states and counties who think they're dodging the bullet by not buying (or not using) the highly insecure and error-prone touchscreen voting machines (which will process 28.9 percent of all votes this year), a huge threat still remains—computerized ballot scanners. They will count 57.6 percent of all votes cast, including absentee ballots.

And don't count on recounts to save the day. In most states, recounts of paper ballots only occur if election results are close. The message to those who want to rig elections is, "rig them by a lot." In some states, like California, spot checks are conducted. But, that will not be an effective way to discover or deter vote fraud or technical failure, particularly in a national election where one vote per machine will probably be enough to swing a race.

Although touchscreens have been getting the bulk of negative publicity lately, electronic ballot scanners have a long and sordid past, as well. Electronic scanners were first introduced into U.S. elections in 1964, and ever since then a steady stream of reports of technical irregularities have caught the attention of scientists, journalists, and activists, most notably the 1988 report, *Accuracy, Integrity, and*

Security in Computerized Vote-Tallying, by Roy G. Saltman, and the 1992 book, *Votescam: The Stealing of America*, by Jim and Ken Collier.

Even though there are several foreign and domestic corporations involved in the U.S. vote counting business, ES&S and Diebold clearly dominate the field. ES&S claims that they have tabulated "56 percent of the U.S. national vote for the past four presidential elections", while a Diebold spokesperson told this writer that the company processed about 35 percent of U.S. electronic vote count in 2002.

But, is there any real difference between Diebold and ES&S? Perhaps not.

Bob Urosevich is currently president of Diebold. Todd is vice president of ES&S. In 1999, American Information Systems (AIS), purchased Business Records Corporation (BRC) to become ES&S. AIS (1980) was formerly Data Mark (1979). Both AIS and Data Mark were founded by the brothers Urosevich. In 2002, Diebold acquired Global Election Systems. Global was founded in 1991, which itself acquired the AccuVote system the same year. Bob Urosevich is a past president of Global.

Of course, most interested observers don't believe that the Urosevich brothers are the real brains behind their respective operations. For information on their financial backers, check out Chapter 8 of Bev's book and my webpage.

Diebold and ES&S have been involved in countless election irregularities over the years, involving both ballot scanners and touchscreens. But, it seems that they've always managed to finesse a happy ending for themselves. Now, it appears that at least Diebold might be in real trouble.

On April 22, 2004, Jim Wasserman of the Associated Press (AP) reported, "By an 8-0 vote, the state's (California) Voting Systems and Procedures Panel recommended that [Secretary of State] Shelley cease the use of the machines, saying that Texas-based Diebold has performed poorly in California and its machines malfunctioned in the state's March 2 primary election, turning away many voters in San Diego County . . . In addition to the ban, panel members recommended that a secretary of state's office report released Wednesday, detailing alleged failings of Diebold in California, be forwarded to the state attorney general's office to consider civil and criminal charges against the company."

Interestingly, no one in the U.S. federal government seems to be paying attention . . . as usual. There is no federal agency that has regulatory authority or oversight of the voting machine industry—not the Federal Election Commission (FEC), not the Department of Justice (DOJ), and not the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The FEC doesn't even have a complete list of all the companies that count votes in U.S. elections.

Once again we are witness to an "eyes closed, hands off" approach to protecting America. The 2004 election rests in the private hands of the Urosevich brothers, who are financed by the far-out right wing and top donors to the Republican Party. The Democrats are either sitting ducks or co-conspirators. I don't know which.

My mantra remains: Vote Paper Ballots, Ditch the Machines.

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