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Voting industry insiders hold secret meeting to hire PR firm to sell electronic voting to public

By Bev Harris

[Black Box Voting](#)

"I just don't like to put it in writing because if this thing winds up in the press somewhere, inadvertently, I don't want the story saying the e-voting industry is in trouble and decided to hire a lobbying firm to take care of their problem for them." – ITAA professional lobbyist Harris Miller talking to voting machine manufacturers in a conference call, Friday, 22 August 2003

August 26, 2003—It is time to see if we still have a free press with a pulse. Please read the following very carefully:

On Friday, Aug. 22, a meeting was held. David Allen, publisher of [Black Box Voting](#), attended this meeting, which was a private teleconference among voting industry insiders that was supposed to be secret. He obtained a transcript and a document.

Participants were R. Doug Lewis who heads The Election Center, Diebold Election Systems, ES&S, Sequoia Voting Systems, Hart Intercivic, a few more voting machine companies, and the ES division of ITAA.

Read Carefully: In this meeting—

1) The purpose of the meeting was to get the voting vendors to pony up \$200,000 by Friday for a massive PR campaign for the voting machine coalition. The money is to go to the ES division of the ITAA.

- Independent investigation of Diebold system for Maryland, Ohio, is the SAIC.
- SAIC Senior Vice president: Ronald Knecht.
- Director of ES division of the ITAA: It is Ronald Knecht
- Firm that wrote the proposal for PR whitewash: ES division of ITAA.
- Money to be paid by Friday; those who don't pay don't get protection. Said in a nicer way, of course.

2) Participants asked if a task force composed of defense contractors and defense procurement contractors could help them "again" like they did with HAVA. They mentioned Lockheed (weapons contractor) and Northrop Grumman (defense contractor) and Accenture (defense procurement contractor). They discussed that these companies were the driving force behind the HAVA bill, which requires purchase of new electronic voting systems and also purchase of new, statewide, electronic voter registration.

The vendors who have advertised the new voter registration system are: Northrop Grumman, SAIC, and Election.com which is owned by Accenture. The vendors for voting machines are: Northrop Grumman (through an alliance); Diebold (ties to Bush administration); Diversified Dynamics (a weapons manufacturer; its machines created by SAIC); General Dynamics (defense contractor); ES&S; Hart

Intercivic (alliance with Accenture); Sequoia, and VoteHere which is seeking to provide a new "vote verification" software which will go into every machine made by every vendor.

- SAIC Vice Chairman: Admiral Bill Owens, a member of the Defense Policy Board.
- Chairman of the VoteHere board of directors: Admiral Bill Owens.
- Director of VoteHere: former CIA director, head of the George Bush School of Business, Robert Gates.

VoteHere: No visible stream of revenue. Very minimal sales history. I have not been able to find any record of venture capital deals. What is the source of funding for this company?

3) There was a significant amount of discussion about collusion and antitrust and "of course you know I really shouldn't be here" and so forth.

While it is normal for an industry to meet to set up a lobbying coalition, here is what is quite abnormal:

- The Election Center, the organization who oversees certification of the voting machines, and coordinates activities of the secretaries of state and the state election directors, was for some reason setting up this lobbying meeting for vendors to launch a massive PR campaign—not to correct the problems with the machines, mind you, but to correct the public perception.
- The 5-day deadline to pay \$200,000 (and, as one vendor said, without even specifying the deliverables!). Normal way would be to meet as an industry, decide what you want in a lobbying firm, interview a few and select. In this case, the ITAA met privately with R. Doug Lewis of The Election Center, then hastily called a teleconference and said "pay us by Friday."

The ITAA then promised to come up with antitrust guidelines, at first almost for free, then for a token sum, a couple thousand dollars.

4) They all agreed the meeting should never get into the media.

5) There was discussion of how to gain influence over the FEC certification process, or more accurately, try to preempt it and devalue it with their own. They are planning to come up with their own "gold standard."

(Will the "gold standard" be the new VoteHere "verification system" which uses cryptography instead of a voter-verified paper ballot? This way, there will be no evidence except for bits and bytes. Watch the SAIC report on Diebold very carefully: if it identifies flaws and suggests correcting them with some sort of cryptography, especially if this includes a cryptographic solution for vote verification, what they are doing is back-dooring the VoteHere product in. Here you go: Get the VoteHere cryptography solution signed off on by various defense contractors and homeland security agencies and then call it the new "gold standard.")

If this happens there will never again be an evidence trail of the vote, in the USA or in many other countries, because they are putting these machines into England, Latin America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, India, and Asia.

6) A very interesting part of this was the discussion of fees. Here's what is so unusual about that: The fee proposed is in no way commensurate with the "deliverables" the ITAA outlines. There must be funding from another source, flying under the radar, on this.

They are promising a massive PR and media campaign, polling, market surveys, a full congressional lobbying effort, approaching and rolling academics and key organizations over to their side, setting up a

panel of academics to refute anything troublesome—all this for the *high* range of \$200,000 divvied up among all the players.

No, that's not \$200k per, that's \$200k total.

No, that's not their fee plus expenses, they said their fee would be \$25 to \$50k (25% of the whole thing).

No that's not a down payment.

Something here stinks to high heaven.

7) Another interesting part of this meeting is that it was set up by "The Election Center" which purports to represent the government side of the election industry, the secretaries of state and the election officials in each state. Yet, this is a lobbying meeting for vendors and at one point the head of The Election Center, R. Doug Lewis, refers to the vendors as "we." (Shouldn't it be "you guys?" And why was he in this meeting at all?)

(Mr. Lewis, who was never elected by anyone and who runs the private corporation "The Election Center" has a resume that is Missing in Action, and who hired him? But I digress)

There was also discussion that said, in essence, "of course, we'll have to put some distance between the Election Center and this lobbying, once it gets going. And then Lewis (Election Center) comes right out and asks the voting machine vendors to cough up money. ITAA, who realizes this is a gaffe, quickly says "you don't have to look after our checkbook," and diverts the conversation.

Now, you can read the notes with a much more benign flavor. They are quite careful about what they say, but I think they stepped over the line with this one. [Click here to read David Allen's full notes.](#)