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## *Electronic Voting*

### **Could the Associated Press rig the election?**

**By Lynn Landes**

Online Journal Contributing Writer

October 23, 2004—The Associated Press (AP) will be the sole source of raw vote totals for the major news broadcasters on Election Night. However, AP spokesmen Jack Stokes and John Jones refused to explain to this journalist how the AP will receive that information. They refused to confirm or deny that the AP will receive direct feed from voting machines and central vote tabulating computers across the country. But, circumstantial evidence suggests that is exactly what will happen.

And what can be downloaded can also be uploaded. Computer experts say that signals can travel both to and from computerized voting machines through wireless technology, modems, and even simple electricity. Computer scientists have long warned that computer voting is an invitation to vote fraud and system failure. An examination of Diebold election software by several computer scientists, including Dr. Avi Rubin and his staff, proved that secret backdoors can be built into computer programs that allow votes to be easily manipulated without detection.

ES&S, the nation's largest voting machine company that will reportedly count 50 percent of all votes, describe on their website how "accessible" their results are: "At ES&S, we know election administrators and the public want fast and accurate election results. That is why we have developed several election management system software solutions to make the reporting process easier, more reliable, and more accessible." Diebold, the second largest voting machine company, advertises a similar service. Both ES&S and Diebold have close ties to the Republican Party.

But, can't the AP be trusted? Isn't it an objective nonpartisan news organization? Some say no. The AP is batting for a Bush presidency.

In [Online Journal](#), Stephen Crockett and Al Lawrence, the hosts of Democratic Talk Radio, wrote, ". . . the Associated Press ran a story that was widely published in newspapers and on the Internet, headlined 'Bush Leads Kerry In Electoral Votes,' that could have been written by the Bush campaign. The assignment of states to candidates, the headline and the conclusions were all simply wrong. The Associated Press should print a retraction and work to see that it is widely published."

And WBAY TV in Green Bay, Wisconsin, ran an AP article reporting that Bush has won the election, weeks before the election is to take place. The AP reported, "At this hour, President Bush has won re-election as president by a 47 percent to 43 percent margin in the popular vote nationwide. Ralph Nader has 1 percent of the vote nationwide. That's with 51 percent of the precincts reporting." According to reports, the AP is now saying the article was a "test article," a never-heard-before journalistic practice.

Who is the AP? The Associated Press was founded in 1848. It is a not-for-profit news cooperative, some would say 'monopoly,' that rakes in about \$500 million dollars a year. The AP is owned by its 1,500 U.S. daily newspaper members. Their board of directors is elected by voting 'bonds.' However, it is not clear who controls the bonds. AP spokespeople would not give out information on who sits on their board, however AP leadership appears quite conservative.

Burl Osborne, chairman of the AP board of directors, is also publisher emeritus of the conservative The Dallas Morning News, a newspaper that endorsed George W. Bush in the last election. Kathleen Carroll, senior vice president and executive editor of AP, was a reporter at The Dallas Morning News before joining AP. Carroll is also on the Associated Press Managing Editors (APME)'s 7-member executive committee. The APME "works in partnership with AP to improve the wire service's performance," according to their website. APME vice president, Deanna Sands, is managing editor of the ultra conservative Omaha World Herald newspaper, whose parent company owns the largest voting machine company in the nation, Election Systems and Software (ES&S).

Many Americans believe that polling organizations and the broadcasters will raise the red flag on any election shenanigans. But others have their doubts.

The Collier brothers, authors of the book, *VoteScam: The Stealing of America*, wrote about vote fraud and the role the news media and polls played.

In 1970, Channel 7 in Miami projected with 100 percent accuracy (a virtual impossibility) the final vote totals on election day. When asked where they got their exit poll data, both Channel 3 & Channel 7 claimed that the League of Women Voters sent it in from the precincts. But, the League's local president tearfully denied it, say, "I don't want to get caught up in this thing." The broadcasters then told the Colliers that a private contractor used the data from a single voting machine to project the winners, but the contractor said he got the data from a University of Miami professor, who in turn denied this. In the end, the news broadcasters appeared to have got the polling numbers out of thin air.

One thing is clear. The air will be thick with distrust and doubt on Election Night 2004.

*Lynn Landes is one of the nation's leading journalists on voting technology and democracy issues. Readers can find her articles at [EcoTalk.org](http://EcoTalk.org). Lynn is a former news reporter for DUTV and commentator for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Contact info: [lynnlandes@earthlink.net](mailto:lynnlandes@earthlink.net) / (215) 629-3553*

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