

## *Black Box Voting*

### **Did the GOP steal another Ohio Election?**

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Online Journal Guest Writers

August 9, 2005 ([freepress.org](http://freepress.org))—The Republican Party has—barely—snatched another election in Ohio. And once again there are telltale symptoms of the kind of vote theft that put George W. Bush in the White House in 2000 and then kept him there in 2004.

This time an outspoken Iraqi War vet named Paul Hackett led the charge for a Cincinnati-area Congressional seat, earning 48 percent of the vote. The spot was open because Bush appointed his pal Rep. Rob Portman to be a trade representative.

Hackett is a rarity among today's Democrats—a blunt, hard-driving truth talker who blasted Bush's attack on Iraq. Hackett labeled W. "a chicken hawk." He's the first Iraqi war vet to run for Congress. He made no bones about the incompetence and cynicism that define the GOP strategy there. In particular, Hackett attacked Bush's attacks on veterans benefits while claiming patriotic support of the war.

In return, GOP candidate Jean Schmidt lied about Hackett's war record. Unlike John Kerry, Hackett fought back immediately.

The Ohio GOP is now being thoroughly roasted by a Coingate scandal in which Republican high roller Tom Noe seems to have walked off with at least \$4 million in state funds, and possibly \$16.5 million in theft and unauthorized administrative charges from a \$50 million rare coin investment fund. Noe is a Bush Pioneer/Ranger level donor, and a supporter of Ohio Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell, the point man in Bush's theft of Ohio's 20 electoral votes and thus the presidency last November.

As his friends and supporters flee him, Noe's role as long-time chair of the Lucas County (Toledo) Board of Elections has come under intense scrutiny. Noe turned the seat over to his wife, Bernadette, in time for a 2004 election rife with disenfranchisement and fraud. Long lines, computer breakdowns, intimidation, harassment and hacked vote counts were the defining characteristics of the election the Noes administered in the Toledo area last November.

In one instance, an entire precinct was shut down because the voting machines were locked in the office of a school principal, who called in sick. Someone also placed the wrong type of ballot scan markers in heavily Democratic Toledo precincts, causing a high rate of uncounted, machine-rejected votes without the voters knowing it.

Overall, experts estimate more than 7,000 votes were stolen outright from John Kerry under the Noes' supervision in Lucas County in 2004.

Whether similar theft defeated Paul Hackett remains to be seen. Hackett ran extremely well in a district thoroughly gerrymandered as a permanent Republican safe seat. Democrats are now crowing about how well Hackett did in "serving notice" that the GOP may be in trouble. But the bottom line is that the Republicans still won the election.

As of 1 am election night/morning (Aug. 2-3), Hackett was within 3,600 votes—about four percent—of Schmidt.

But election officials announced a mysterious "computer glitch" that delayed reports from Clermont County, which accounted for roughly a quarter of all the ballots cast in the district.

When things finally settled out, Clermont gave Schmidt 58 percent, and a 5,000-vote margin and, thus, the election.

Earlier in the evening—around 9 pm—Hackett and Schmidt had been in a virtual dead heat, according to sources in the Cincinnati area (see among them [billmon.org/archives/002073.html](http://billmon.org/archives/002073.html)).

A full 88 percent of the district's precincts had then reported, including more than half those in Clermont. As in Florida 2000 and Ohio 2004, it looked like a cliffhanger. Schmidt's lead was less than 900 votes.

Clermont's "technical malfunction" with optical scan readers was blamed on the humidity. Election officials said the southern Ohio summer had soaked into the ballots, making it hard to pass them through optical scan machines.

Once the problem was "solved," Schmidt picked up more than enough votes to guarantee victory. The percentages by which she won in the post-glitch vote count were far higher than those by which she had been winning prior to the glitch. Vote counts were also higher than expected in the strongest Schmidt precincts.

Clermont and neighboring Butler and Warren Counties gave George W. Bush a margin in 2004 that exceeded his entire statewide margin over John Kerry. Warren County became infamous on election night, when its supervisors suddenly declared a "Homeland Emergency" and dismissed all media and Democrats from the vote count. Bush then emerged with a huge, unexpected and unmonitored majority.

Clermont, Butler and Warren Counties' totals were also suspect because a Democratic candidate for the Ohio Supreme Court implausibly out-pollled John Kerry. As would be expected, Bush vastly out ran the Republican candidate for Supreme Court Chief Justice in those three counties. But Democrat C. Ellen Connelly, a pro-choice, pro-gay-marriage African-American from Cleveland somehow got a higher vote count than Kerry in these conservative, predominantly white southern Ohio counties. Richard Hayes Philips and other experts who have assessed that vote say it is beyond implausible, indicating a high likelihood of fraud.

But along with Al Gore in 2000 and John Kerry in 2004, Paul Hackett has become another Democratic candidate whose campaign went suddenly and mysteriously down to defeat late in the evening of a close election. Amidst the obligatory computer glitches, the GOP candidate was declared the winner before the vote count could be investigated.

Did Clermont County do for Schmidt in 2005 what it did for Bush in 2004? Did that "glitch" in the evening vote count give GOP dirty tricksters time to once again hack the machines they needed to win?

Who in the Bush/Rove Justice Department or major media will even ask the question?

*Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman are co-editors of "Did George W. Bush Steal America's 2004 Election?" published by <http://www.freepress.org>, along with "The Fittrakis Files. Harvey Wasserman's History of the US" is available through [harveywasserman.com](http://harveywasserman.com), along with "A Glimpse of the Big Light: Losing Parents, Finding Spirit". For more on Clermont County, see [billmon.org/archives/002073.html](http://billmon.org/archives/002073.html).*