

Trust us, plead the makers of electronic voting machines—our touch-screen systems are state-of-the-art, fool-proof marvels!

But—oops—in a couple of recent, high-profile tests, the computers glitched and the makers of the machines had virtual egg all over their faces. First up was Sequoia Voting Systems, which boasts that its machines deliver “nothing less than 100 percent accuracy,” held a demonstration of its newest technology for California senate staffers in August.

Imagine Sequoia’s 100 percent embarrassment when its machine balked during demonstration votes on a Spanish-language ballot. The testers punched in their votes on the touch screen...but—oops—the machine did not record the votes, apparently having lost them somewhere in cyberspace.

Luckily, this was a test of Sequoia’s new system that includes a paper record of every vote—and the paper trail revealed the computer’s error, which otherwise would have been undetected, disenfranchising the voter.

The lesson is obvious: These machines must have a paper backup.

You could ask U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski about that. At a festival in her state of Maryland, the public was invited to a try the Diebold electronic voting machines that will count Marylanders’ votes this November. The senator was there, gave the machine a whirl, and—oops—it erred! Touching the screen to vote on a sample referendum question, she apparently “brushed” the question below it, and the machine recorded a wrong vote.

Curiously, Diebold and Maryland election officials have refused to allow an independent examination of this flawed demonstration machine, arguing that any such test might undermine “public confidence” in the technology that will count the

—continued p. 2

# The *High Tower* **LOWDOWN**

■ Edited by Jim Hightower and Phillip Frazer ■ Vol. 6 No. 9 ■ September 2004

## They’re squirreling our right to vote

# Can we prevent another stolen election?

**F**orget worrying about an “October Surprise”—it’s the “November Surprise” that could squirrel this election! All across the country, there’s a deepening suspicion that the Nov. 2nd balloting will not be on the up-and-up, that electronic voting machines, voter intimidation tactics, and other means will be used to pervert the results and subvert democracy à la the 2000 presidential power grab.

There is so little public trust that the coming vote will be an honest one that 13 members of Congress wrote to Kofi Annan in July requesting that UN observers be dispatched to monitor the integrity of our democratic process.

Then, when Rep. Corrine Brown (D-Florida) reminded outraged GOP leaders that they had already participated in one stolen election, having abetted the Bush “coup d’état” in 2000—whoa, Nellie, the foam hit the fan!

Republicans, purple-faced with anger, shouted the woman down, demanded that she be tossed off the floor, and—on a party-line vote—ordered that her “coup

tives, and concerned Republicans—doubt very much that our government is able to “police itself” when it comes to holding fair elections.

### The machine ate my vote

This year, nearly a third of the votes for president will be cast on electronic touch-screen voting machines. The problem with these computerized systems is that they are easily hacked into, open to fraud, prone to glitches and failures, and—most damning—produce no paper record of your vote (*Lowdown*, October, 2003). With no paper trail, there’s no way to do a verifiable recount in case there’s a charge that the machine miscounted or was fraudulently manipulated. “Trust us,” say compliant promoters of touch-screen balloting systems, which I call “faith-based voting.”

The evidence is overwhelming that we should have no faith at all in these paperless machines. In recent elections in California, Florida, Georgia, New Mexico, North Carolina, Texas, and elsewhere, electronic voting systems have broken down during balloting, malfunctioned as they tallied votes, miscounted tens of thousands of ballots, disenfranchised voters by deleting their ballots, trans-



d’état” comment be stricken from the record. Apparently, they think that by pretending no one has uttered such a truth, the truth itself will simply go away.

Hey goobers—the truth is that many millions of red-white-and-blue Americans—including an increasing number of independents, true conserva-

public's vote in November.

Who do they think they're fooling? Not Senator Mikulski—she promptly signed on as a co-sponsor of legislation requiring a paper trail for all electronic votes.

### MAKING A SPLASH

Corporate advertising is everywhere.

Now meet the latest advertising advance: Wizmark.

That's wiz, as in, take a whiz. Yes, we're talking about male urination, and the advertising potential therein. Some of you fellers will have met those little TV screens some places have above the urinals, so you can watch an ad as you...well, whiz.

But no, I'm talking about ads in the urinals. Indeed, ads you whiz on.

For those who don't know, public urinals often have plastic screens that hold deodorizers, right above the drain. Wizmark has now accessorized these things with ads. Not some bland printed ad, either. Dr. Richard Deutsch, creator of the Wizmark, has brought to us the world's first—*are you ready?*—“interactive urinal communicator.”

He offers one that has a motion detector. When a gentleman steps forward to do his business, a ring of flashing lights are triggered in the screen, drawing the gentleman's startled attention to your corporate logo, safely protected in the middle of the screen by a waterproof casing.

Or, if that's too subtle, Wizmark offers a voice & sound model with a micro-processor that shouts ad slogans and corporate jingles at the urinator. Still not tacky enough? Gotcha covered. Dr. Deutsch has the patent on a radio-frequency model that can read your ID card and personally greet you when you step up to the urinal: “Hey, Frank, good to see you again!”

I don't even want to know where the ad hucksters are taking us.

## Nicknaming Bush

Leo Melzer, one of our California *Lowdowners*, suggests that George W is in bad need of a proper nickname. Good idea! After all, Bush tags everyone he knows with a pet moniker—“Kenny Boy” Lay, for example, or the former staffer named Bond, whom George dubbed “Bondage.”

So it's contest time! Send us your best shot at a nickname that you think defines George “[Blank]” Bush for what he is. We'll pick three winners, each of whom will win a 1-year extension of their current *Lowdown* subscription, or a free 1-year subscription to give to anyone they choose.

Send your nicknames by email: [editors@hightowerlowdown.org](mailto:editors@hightowerlowdown.org). Respond quickly, for we might not have Bush to kick around after Nov. 2!

ferred votes from one candidate to another, and possibly altered election outcomes.

In California's March primary, for example, machines provided by Diebold Inc. broke down by the hundreds, so thousands of voters were turned away. A subsequent investigation found that Diebold had installed illegal software in its machines and then lied about it to state election officials. The California Secretary of State termed the corporation's performance “despicable,” banned Diebold from four counties, and called for fraud charges against it.

The alarm about paperless e-voting has been most loudly rung by our nation's computer scientists who have analyzed the systems right down to their source codes

and find them to be so untrustworthy as to be an imminent danger to democracy. In one survey of 100 computer-security experts, 83 percent said e-voting is less or much less secure against vote tampering than paper-based systems.

And as we reported in our July, 2004, issue, a *New York Times* investigation found that slot machines are far more regulated, and subject to government investigation of both the hardware and software, than are electronic voting machines.

### A corrupting coziness

The corporate and governmental officials saddling us with these paperless touch-screen systems say that the rising public concern is nonsense—“pie-in-the-sky paranoia,” as one state official scoffed. They assert that the machines are perfectly secure because they are tested and certified by professional technology labs.

Yes, but these certifying labs are not public entities working for you and me—they are for-profit corporations that are hired (and, of course, can be fired) by the very companies that make the machines! And these “certifiers” refuse to discuss their testing methods, much less reveal publicly the flaws that they find in their clients' computerized voting systems. They've turned voting into a closed and cozy corporate fiefdom.

“Oh, fiddle-faddle!” exclaims an outfit called the Election Center, which is made up of state and local election officials.

That might be cute, except that the center is substantially funded by the three largest makers of e-voting machines—Diebold, Electronic Systems & Software, and Sequoia Voting Systems. The relationship is so tight that the center's national conference for election officials, held last month, featured a welcoming reception sponsored by Diebold

and a dinner cruise on the Potomac sponsored by Sequoia.

The conflicts don't stop at the center. For example, the National Association of Secretaries of State (whose members usually are the top overseers of elections in their states) gets 43 percent of its budget from voting-machine companies and other vendors. The current president of the association says of the machine purveyors: “Personally, I've known a lot of these people for a long time, and we've become a family.”

They're such a close family that they've erased the line that should separate public from private. It's the old revolving-door scam, where election officials who decide which company's machines to buy or lease suddenly spin out of public office and join one of the companies, usually for a very fat paycheck. Examples:

- Georgia's ex-Secretary of State, Lewis Massey, was hired as a lobbyist for Diebold in 2002 to help it win the \$54 million state contract to provide 19,000 touch-screen machines (which produced questionable results and charges that Diebold illegally changed its software three times after the machines were certified, unbeknownst to Georgia officials).
- Former Florida Secretary of State Sandra Mortham not only joined ES&S as a lobbyist to help it win \$70 million worth of county contracts for its machines in 2002, but she also lobbied for the Florida Association of Counties, which—for a fee—gave an exclusive endorsement to ES&S equipment. In that year's September primary, ES&S machines had severe problems in Miami and elsewhere, making a mess of the election.
- In 2003, California Secretary of State Bill Jones pushed his state's \$200 million bond initiative to help counties buy e-voting systems

## Do something!

### 10 things you can do to protect democracy on Election Day

1. Register to vote.
2. Confirm your own voter registration at least one month prior to Election Day.
3. Contact your local election administrator between now and November and find out how to vote and where to vote.
4. Be a non-partisan election monitor.\*
5. Contact your Congress critter and urge emergency passing of H.R. 2239.\*\*
6. Know how to get in touch with local attorneys and legal advisers prepared to work on Election Day issues.\*\*\*
7. Volunteer to work at your local polling station on Election Day.
8. Report your own voting experience.
9. Volunteer on a campaign in the weeks leading up to Election Day.
10. Deliver friends, family, and/or coworkers to the polls.

\* Common Cause Vote 2004 Task Force—Join thousands of concerned individuals to monitor polling stations on Election Day to make sure the voting is efficient, fair, and available to all who are eligible. Visit [www.commoncause.org/action/voting\\_signup.cfm](http://www.commoncause.org/action/voting_signup.cfm) or call 1-800-926-1064.

\*\* H.R. 2239—Sponsored by Rep. Rush Holt of New Jersey, this bill needs 218 cosponsors in order to receive a discharge petition and come up for a vote. Contact your local representatives and urge their support. Find out how to reach your representative by visiting [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov).

\*\*\* Election Protection Coalition—Working in communities at high risk for disenfranchisement, the Coalition will deploy thousands of volunteers, including lawyers, law students, and community activists to provide on-site poll monitoring and same-day legal assistance. Contact 1-866-OUR-VOTE or visit [www.electionprotection2004.org](http://www.electionprotection2004.org).

then joined Sequoia to help it win the county contracts. He's now the GOP candidate for the U.S. Senate against Democrat Barbara Boxer—a race that'll see millions of votes being cast on the machines Jones helped put in place.

**Old-fashioned suppression**

Wrapped-in-the-flag editorials will soon be admonishing everyone to vote —“It's your patriotic duty,” they'll solemnly intone. Yet many partisans of the Republican persuasion feel otherwise about certain voters, and they're doing all they can to intimidate, harass, and otherwise keep these voters from the polls.

As bluntly put by John Pappageorge, a white GOP state representative from the crucial swing state of Michigan: “If we do not suppress the Detroit vote, we're going to have a tough time in this election.” Need I mention that Detroit is 83 percent black and overwhelmingly Democratic? Pappageorge later told *New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert that, golly, he certainly meant nothing racist by his comment, just politics.

Leave it to First Brother Jeb of Florida to lead the way in racial politics. The governor's Republican operatives were very aggressive in holding down the African-American vote in 2000 to produce George W.'s 537 vote “win” in the Sunshine State—and here they go again. In August, columnist Herbert, who closely monitors voter-suppression efforts, reported a conversation with a peer of Florida's GOP establishment, who candidly told him: “A Democrat can't win a statewide election in Florida without a high turnout...of African-Americans. It's no secret that the name of the game for Republicans is to restrain that turnout as much as possible.”

They're out to turn Florida into the next...Florida. Start with an ugly act of intimidation in Orlando by the state police, which reports to the Jebster. Why Orlando? In the last few years, this former GOP stronghold has been voting Democratic (including for Gore in 2000), thanks in large part to a strong African-American turnout organized by the Orlando League of Voters.

This summer, some 50 of the league's grassroots leaders suddenly began getting the knocks on their doors from plainclothes—but pointedly armed—state police. These community leaders, mostly elderly black women, were understandably shaken to be confronted in their homes by armed troopers interrogating them about their electoral actions and motives. To this day, police authorities refuse to say exactly what crimes these folks are suspected of committing, vaguely referring instead to unspecified allegations that some voter fraud might have been committed in March's mayoral election.

Odd. This charge had been raised by the Republican losers right after that election, but had been investigated and rejected by this same police agency. Indeed, in a May 13 letter, Jeb Bush's state-police honcho wrote that “there was no basis to support the allegations of election fraud,” and he declared “this matter closed.”

Police now assert that the chief's letter was “poorly worded,” and the intimidating in-home interrogations have continued, and now Attorney General John Ashcroft has jackbooted into the fray, sending federal agents to investigate voter registration drives, including questioning new registrants at their homes, starting in the swing states of New Mexico, Ohio and West Virginia.

Other ugly election day tricks to

look for include turning away voters who show up without photo IDs, rather than providing them with an affidavit option as required by law, and telling college students they can't vote in their college locales, which they have a clear legal right to do. Last year in Texas, at Prairie View A&M, an African-American school near Houston, the Republican district attorney threatened to arrest any students who tried to register to vote there, only to back down in the face of a threatened lawsuit. Now he's resigned, citing family reasons (my guess is his kids called him a bozo).

This month the 3-2 Republican majority of county commissioners voted against providing a campus polling place, instead requiring students to trek into town—a move called “pure racist” by a state legislator.

**The rebellion**

People get a little testy when you mess with their right to vote. Even those who rarely vote don't want anyone squirreling their right to do so—and to have it properly counted. That's why there's a growing uproar throughout the country over the games that the Powers That Be are playing.

Nevada has been in the forefront of this spreading rebellion against virtual voting on touch-screen systems. This summer, it became the first state to require that every electronic machine provide a paper record of each person's vote. The industry and its sycophantish group of election officials have long claimed that paper-trail machines wouldn't work, were too complicated for poll workers, would slow down elections, yadda-yadda-yadda. But Nevada, which demanded—and got—paper-backed machines from Sequoia, held its primary elections on them this month...and lo and

**JENNA AND BARBARA IN FATIGUES?**

Did you take catch the political coming out of Jenna and Barbara, George W's 22-year-old twin daughters, who have long been kept away from the political glare? Just graduated from college, they have been brought into the limelight by the Bush political campaign debuting in a photo spread and puff piece that ran in *Vogue*. They looked splendid, beautifully made up and swathed in glamorous designer gowns—one by Oscar de la Renta, the other by Calvin Klein. No telling how many silk worms toiled to make this spread possible.

But—tacky me—I couldn't help thinking as I viewed the photos: Why aren't they in fatigues and Kevlar vests, like other women and men their age?

Jenna and Barbara announced that they would be joining their daddy's election campaign, but I had to ask myself: Why aren't they joining their daddy's war?

After all, he says that his war in Iraq is absolutely essential to our national security, worth the 1000 deaths of US troops, the mutilations and serious illnesses of thousands more, the tens of thousands of civilian casualties, and the illegal conscription of tens of thousands of Americans forced to stay in this disastrous war beyond their tour of duty.

So, if daddy's war is worth the sacrifice of America's workaday families—why is it not worth the enlistment of his military-age family?

Maybe it's genetic. After all, George himself was a “ferocious war hawk” who used family connections to keep himself 8,000 miles from Vietnam.

**THE REAL POST-WAR PLAN**

If you think that the Bushites had no post-war plan for what they would do in Iraq after our military ousted Saddam, think again.

—continued p. 4

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You can see their plan in policies that were quietly and autocratically imposed on the Iraqi people during the reign of Mr. L. Paul Bremer III, who was our occupying czar there.

While America's media establishment has been focused on the raging war by Iraqi insurgents and by the Bushites' attempt to enthroned a puppet government there, the neo-con laissez-faire zealots in the administration have been gleefully using this ravaged country as their own ideological playground. For years, these Ayn Randian theorists have longed to create their utopia of a corporate state, and they've used the IMF, World Bank, WTO and other monkey wrenches to try to implement their theories in Latin America and elsewhere. But they've never had an entire economy at their disposal... until they grabbed Iraq.

While Baghdad was burning, Bremer arrived. Rather than putting out the fires, he used them as a distraction to issue decrees that instantly opened up Iraq to a total corporate takeover.

For example, his decrees open all of that nation's public assets to foreign corporate ownership, and they allow 100 percent of the country's industries—from banking to food—to be owned by foreigners. Also, Bremer ruled that 100 percent of the profits that foreign investors make in Iraq can now be hauled out of the country—there's no requirement that any of these profits be reinvested there, nor do the investors have to pay even a dime in taxes on the profits they haul away. This isn't "liberation," as the Bushites like to call their Iraqi adventure—it's legalized looting...and it's fueling the continuing anger and armed resistance by the Iraqi people, who're determined not to have their nation looted.

To get this full story, see Naomi Klein's explosive article in the September issue of *Harper's Magazine*.

behold, they worked beautifully!

Other states are joining the rebellion: California has demanded strict supervision and major security changes on all touch-screen machines used in the state (and will require paper trails after this year's election), and any California voter who wants one will be able to get an old-fashioned paper ballot from poll workers on Nov. 2. Maine will require a paper trail on electronic machines when it introduces them after this year. And even Ohio's Republican Secretary of State, who earlier had certified the use of Diebold machines, now has blocked their use, citing unresolved security risks. The Ohio legislature has passed a law requiring voter-verifiable paper trails for any electronic voting in the future.

Meanwhile, back in Florida, distrust of paperless voting is so rampant that even Jeb's own Republican Party—much to his embarrassment—advised its members to "make sure your vote counts" by casting absentee votes on paper ballots, thereby bypassing the untrustworthy machines. Then, pouring gasoline on the fire of public distrust, Jeb rammed through a rule outlawing manual recounts of votes cast on electronic machines! (And this despite a state law mandating manual recounts in close elections.) Voting rights groups sued, and a state judge, declaring in August that the no-recount ploy was "contrary to the plain language" of the law, tossed Jeb's rule into the legal trashbin.

But ol' Jeb just keeps on coming. As in 2000, he and his Secretary of State tried in July to purge the state's voter lists of thousands of eligible voters. Their scheme was to use yet another list of convicted felons (Florida is one of seven states

## Lowdown fires sport editor

The longtime head of our sports desk, Biff Bobble, has been unconditionally released due to the egregious error he committed in the August *Lowdown*.

Bobble credited Mickey Mantle with the still-unequaled 56 game hitting streak which—as was pointed out by approximately 119,999 of the *Lowdown's* 120,000 subscribers—belongs to the Yankee Clipper, Joe DiMaggio. "Biff has been a fine editor over the years," said a moist-eyed Jim Hightower, "but his reflexes obviously aren't what they used to be..."

Hightower, a former Little League All-Star (.517 BA) and a two-year letterman at second base for the Denison High Yellow Jackets (Sting 'em!), will now take charge of all baseball references.

that permanently ban felons from voting, even after they've served their time). Just as in 2000, however, Jeb's felon list was filled with errors. People who weren't felons were included, and the list conveniently excluded Florida Hispanics, who tend to vote Republican: most of the people on the list were African-American. When this obvious bias was uncovered, Jeb was forced to scrap his latest tawdry effort to suppress Democratic votes.

### What to do?

These are not normal times. There is a dangerous crisis of confidence in our democratic process. Everywhere I go, the first and most urgent question I get asked is: "Will our votes count?" It's hard to believe that it's come to this: that America's political system has become so corrupted by money and crude partisan power plays that ordinary people now fear the act of voting itself will be stolen from them.

What to do? Everything you can. Raise a ruckus with your Congress critter for emergency passage of H.R. 2239, the national legislation to

require paper trails (see "Do Something" on page 2), and demand that your county and state officials require them too. If you don't want to trust the machines, vote absentee, which is done on paper. Write op-eds and letters to the editor, call talk shows, speak to church and civic groups, become a trained volunteer poll watcher (call 1-866-OUR-VOTE), recruit others, and do whatever else your creative mind can devise.

But the best defense against voter suppression and electronic fraud is to flood the polls. There are only so many votes they can prevent or steal—a massive turnout will overwhelm their perfidy. Make it an issue where you live that the bastards are trying to hold down the vote: One sure way to get Americans to act is to let 'em know that the elites don't want them to.

Finally, be prepared to take to the streets. If the Bushites try to pull a Florida again, we can't pretend that it's a matter for lawyers, as Al Gore did in 2000—it'll be another raw power grab, and We The People will have to step forward. Bring pitchforks and torches.

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#### CAN WE PREVENT ANOTHER STOLEN ELECTION?

- 1 What coup d'état?
- 2 The glitches to date
- 3 The revolving door
- 4 Election Day dirty tricks