



Would you trust a bank that refused to issue ATM receipts?

Will you trust your democracy to voting machines without them?

The foundation of any democracy is the voters' ability to trust the validity of its election results. As Chellie Pingree, president of Common Cause, stated at the first public hearing of the Carter-Baker Commission on Federal Election Reform, "Voting is the one tangible link that most Americans have with their government. They may never speak to an elected representative or visit the U.S. Capitol. Yet in November, they evoke a solemn agreement between the people and their government. It is crucial that the singular act of voting be worthy of the people's trust."

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS FROM THE 2004 ELECTION

When the exit polls and the tallied vote diverged on Election Day 2004, it was widely assumed that the exit polls were wrong. Now a number of detailed analysis show that it may have been the tallied vote that was off. Exit polls have been used for several decades and have been remarkably accurate. Indeed, they have been used in many elections to detect corruption of official vote tallies, most recently in the Ukraine.

On March 31, 2005, U.S. Count Votes released a landmark study it had coordinated that analyzed the discrepancy between exit polls and official vote tallies in the 2004 presidential election. The study, entitled "Analysis of the 2004 Presidential Election Poll Discrepancies," was coauthored by an independent group of statisticians and mathematicians affiliated with numerous universities including Case Western Reserve, Cornell, Illinois, Notre Dame, Penn, Southern Methodist, Temple, Utah, and Wisconsin.

The study showed unprecedented discrepancies between exit poll results and final tallies in several battleground states that still have not been explained. *The final set of exit polls on election night showed John Kerry defeating George Bush by 2.6 percent of the popular vote and a solid majority of 286 to 252 electoral votes.*

The academic team notes that *precincts with hand-counted paper ballots showed no statistical discrepancy between the exit polls and the official results, but for other voting technologies, the overall discrepancy was far larger than the polls' margin of error.*

COMPUTERS: HACKED AND CRASHING

Almost weekly, we hear a story about computers being hacked and information

being compromised. These stories range from an individual's personal computer to huge, supposedly secure, national defense and corporate financial computer systems. Yet, the security measures employed by electronic voting machines are primitive. As Professor Avi Ruben of Johns Hopkins said, "I would have flunked any of my computer science students who employed such a faulty system."

In addition, computers are notoriously prone to malfunction. They crash, often losing any data that was previously entered. A paper ballot—either created by the voter and hand-counted or tabulated by an optical scan machine, or printed by an electronic voting machine after being seen and verified by the voter—is the only way to reliably reconstruct, recount, or audit an election result. This helps explain why the Carter-Baker Commission recommended verifiable paper trails for all electronic voting machines.

PAPER BALLOT

In testimony before the Carter-Baker Commission, David Dill, Professor of Computer Science at Stanford University and founder of the Verified Voting Foundation, made a central point: "We need technology that will allow each voter to verify that his or her vote was correctly captured. At this time, the only technology that can realistically meet this need is paper."

One of the difficulties is that public officials responsible for the conduct of elections lack the training needed to understand computerized voting. Dill went on to say, "The Association of Computing Machinery (ACM), the largest professional organization of computer technologists, has taken a position that 'voting systems should enable each voter to expect a physical (e.g., paper) record to verify that his or her vote has been accurately cast and to serve as an independent check on the result produced and stored by the system.'" A poll of ACM members showed fully 95 percent agreeing with this statement.

The unanswered questions about the 2004 election warrant the highest concern of every American citizen regardless of party affiliation. The possibility of a faulty vote-counting system is the most serious issue any democracy can face.

Here is what is needed and what you can do.

NEEDED: A system of voter-verified paper ballots so voters can inspect individual permanent records of their ballots before they are cast. This should be adopted in time for the 2006 elections. H.R. 550, The Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act of 2005, is the most comprehensive of the bills before congress.

Action: Contact your elected representatives in Washington to ask them to support H.R. 550. Tell them that your faith in our election system rests on the ability to verify that your vote was counted accurately.

This call to action supported by:

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For Additional Information:

For more information about how you can help reform our broken election system, go to <http://www.commoncause.org>

For the testimony by David Dill cited above, go to <http://www.verifiedvoting.org/article.php?id=5789>

For the study by the team of academics cited above, go to http://electionarchive.org/ucvAnalysis/US/Exit_Polls_2004_Edison-Mitofsky.pdf

For weekly updates on election information, go to <http://www.electionline.org>

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