

Dear members of Protect California Ballots,

Summer greetings! Here is a short article I wrote. Also in the Atlantic Monthly are two short articles: [The voting Technology We Really Need? Paper by Lawrence Norden \(5/4/17\)](#) and [the Case for Standardized and Secure Voting Technology Dan Gilmor \(5/26/17\)](#). Please read and share these.

After each election, Ask One More Question:
Were the votes counted accurately?
by Judy Alter

After each election here in the United States, “pundits” spin the results, offering explanations for the winners and losers. They discuss the issues using “either” “or” reasoning. They seem blind to the possibility that our method of secret vote counting, on computers, where no one can verify the accuracy of the vote count, may actually be the determining factor in the “result.”

Spin

After each election, experts-- real or self declared—in counties, states, or our entire country, offer their analyses of campaigns, candidates, donors, political party actions and values to explain the outcome of an election. Citizens can read and hear their discussions on every level and method of the media. “Pundits” examine all types of populations, geographical locations and even class distinctions. They interview a variety of voters, party leaders and even candidates. The experts’ explanations appear to be “balanced.”

“Either” - “Or” Reasons

The explainers “balance” their analyses by using “either”-“or” reasons. In this way, they set up artificial dichotomies such as young or old, black or white, middle class or poor, urban or rural, disillusioned or naïve, well-educated or less-educated. Reality is much more complex. Most of these distinctions ignore voters’ real life experiences and the richness, depth and breadth of their everyday circumstances that help determine their voting choices.

Secret Vote Counting

The “pundits” overlook a vital FACT. In a truly democratic election voters mark their ballots in private, cast their ballots in public and count the votes on the ballots in PUBLIC. In most places in the U.S., election officials count our votes on computers. That is secret vote counting. Four or five private companies own and program the election machines and software used all over the country. Unless officials carry out a rigorous hand counted audit, no one can know if the vote counts are accurate.

Frequently the “official” results do not align with the exit polls. Although election officials in countries throughout the world use exit polls that corroborate with vote counts to determine the accuracy of the election results, in our country the exit polls that do not match the “official” results are dismissed as biased or flawed. As Jonathan Simon, expert in exit poll analyses, points out repeatedly, we here in the U.S. are in DENIAL. We believe “it can’t happen here!” (See Election Defense Alliance for his many articles about the seriousness of the recurring pattern of election results shifting to the Republicans when exit polls showed Democrats winning.) Even when the 2000 election of George W. Bush was recounted by hand in Florida and the result showed that Al Gore really won, nothing could be done. The correct winner could not be inaugurated into the office of the President. This must not continue to happen here!

Public vote counting

After every election-- local or federal-- citizens must ask: “Were the votes counted accurately?” Do they agree with the exit polls? If not, let citizens hand count paper ballots and count the votes on our ballots in PUBLIC. Hand counting is the only way citizens know if vote counts are accurate. Why not just hand count votes on ballots at the precincts with party witnesses and videotaping the entire process? Over 75% of the world’s democracies hand-count their votes. We in the United States could also. We could prevent the concern about hacking, and save money by not paying private companies for their machines.

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Please send us your suggestions for actions and thank you.