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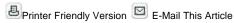## Breaking News & Views for the Progressive Community

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Evidence Mounts That The Vote May Have Been Hacked
by Thom Hartmann

When I spoke with Jeff Fisher this morning (Saturday, November 06, 2004), the Democratic candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives from Florida's 16th District said he was waiting for the FBI to show up. Fisher has evidence, he says, not only that the Florida election was hacked, but of who hacked it and how. And not just this year, he said, but that these same people had previously hacked the Democratic primary race in 2002 so that Jeb Bush would not have to run against Janet Reno, who presented a real threat to Jeb, but instead against Bill McBride, who Jeb beat.

"It was practice for a national effort," Fisher told me.

And some believe evidence is accumulating that the national effort happened on November 2, 2004.

The State of Florida, for example, publishes a county-by-county record of votes cast and people registered to vote by party affiliation. Net denizen Kathy Dopp compiled the official state information into a table, available at http://ustogether.org/Florida_Election.htm, and noticed something startling.

While the heavily scrutinized touch-screen voting machines seemed to produce results in which the registered Democrat/Republican ratios largely matched the Kerry/Bush vote, in Florida's counties using results from optically scanned paper ballots - fed into a central tabulator PC and thus vulnerable to hacking – the results seem to contain substantial anomalies.

In Baker County, for example, with 12,887 registered voters, 69.3% of them Democrats and 24.3% of them Republicans, the vote was only 2,180 for Kerry and 7,738 for Bush, the opposite of what is seen everywhere else in the country where registered Democrats largely voted for Kerry.

In Dixie County, with 9,676 registered voters, 77.5% of them Democrats and a mere 15% registered as Republicans, only 1,959 people voted for Kerry, but 4,433 voted for Bush.

The pattern repeats over and over again - but only in the counties where optical scanners were used. Franklin County, 77.3% registered Democrats, went 58.5% for Bush. Holmes County, 72.7% registered Democrats, went 77.25% for Bush.

Yet in the touch-screen counties, where investigators may have been more vigorously looking for such anomalies, high percentages of registered Democrats generally equaled high percentages of votes for Kerry. (I had earlier reported that county size was a variable – this turns out not to be the case. Just the use of touch-screens versus optical

scanners.)

More visual analysis of the results can be seen at http://us together.org/election04/FloridaDataStats.htm, and www.rubberbug.com/temp/Florida2004chart.htm. Note the trend line – the only variable that determines a swing toward Bush was the use of optical scan machines.

One possible explanation for this is the "Dixiecrat" theory, that in Florida white voters (particularly the rural ones) have been registered as Democrats for years, but voting Republican since Reagan. Looking at the 2000 statistics, also available on Dopp's site, there are similar anomalies, although the trends are not as strong as in 2004. But some suggest the 2000 election may have been questionable in Florida, too.

One of the people involved in Dopp's analysis noted that it may be possible to determine the validity of the "rural Democrat" theory by comparing Florida's white rural counties to those of Pennsylvania, another swing state but one that went for Kerry, as the exit polls there predicted. Interestingly, the Pennsylvania analysis, available at http://ustogether.org/election04/PA_vote_patt.htm, doesn't show the same kind of swings as does Florida, lending credence to the possibility of problems in Florida.

Even more significantly, Dopp had first run the analysis while filtering out smaller (rural) counties, and still found that the only variable that accounted for a swing toward Republican voting was the use of optical-scan machines, whereas counties with touch-screen machines generally didn't swing - regardless of size.

Others offer similar insights, based on other data. A professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, noted that in Florida the vote to raise the minimum wage was approved by 72%, although Kerry got 48%. "The correlation between voting for the minimum wage increase and voting for Kerry isn't likely to be perfect," he noted, "but one would normally expect that the gap - of 1.5 million votes - to be far smaller than it was."

While all of this may or may not be evidence of vote tampering, it again brings the nation back to the question of why several states using electronic voting machines or scanners programmed by private, for-profit corporations and often connected to modems produced votes inconsistent with exit poll numbers.

Those exit poll results have been a problem for reporters ever since Election Day.

Election night, I'd been doing live election coverage for WDEV, one of the radio stations that carries my syndicated show, and, just after midnight, during the 12:20 a.m. Associated Press Radio News feed, I was startled to hear the reporter detail how Karen Hughes had earlier sat George W. Bush down to inform him that he'd lost the election. The exit polls were clear: Kerry was winning in a landslide. "Bush took the news stoically," noted the AP report.

But then the computers reported something different. In several pivotal states.

Conservatives see a conspiracy here: They think the exit polls were rigged.

Dick Morris, the infamous political consultant to the first Clinton campaign who became a Republican consultant and Fox News regular, wrote an article for The Hill, the publication read by every political junkie in Washington, DC, in which he made a couple of brilliant points.

"Exit Polls are almost never wrong," Morris wrote. "They eliminate the two major potential fallacies in survey research by correctly separating actual voters from those who pretend they will cast ballots but never do and by substituting actual observation for guesswork in judging the relative turnout of different parts of the state."

He added: "So, according to ABC-TVs exit polls, for example, Kerry was slated to carry Florida, Ohio, New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada, and Iowa, all of which Bush carried. The only swing state the network had going to Bush was West Virginia, which the president won by 10 points."

Yet a few hours after the exit polls were showing a clear Kerry sweep, as the computerized vote numbers began to come in from the various states the election was called for Bush.

How could this happen?

On the CNBC TV show "Topic A With Tina Brown," several months ago, Howard Dean had filled in for Tina Brown as guest host. His guest was Bev Harris, the Seattle grandmother who started www.blackboxvoting.org from her living room. Bev pointed out that regardless of how votes were tabulated (other than hand counts, only done in odd places like small towns in Vermont), the real "counting" is done by computers. Be they Diebold Opti-Scan machines, which read paper ballots filled in by pencil or ink in the voter's hand, or the scanners that read punch cards, or the machines that simply record a touch of the screen, in all cases the final tally is sent to a "central tabulator" machine.

That central tabulator computer is a Windows-based PC.

"In a voting system," Harris explained to Dean on national television, "you have all the different voting machines at all the different polling places, sometimes, as in a county like mine, there's a thousand polling places in a single county. All those machines feed into the one machine so it can add up all the votes. So, of course, if you were going to do something you shouldn't to a voting machine, would it be more convenient to do it to each of the 4000 machines, or just come in here and deal with all of them at once?"

Dean nodded in rhetorical agreement, and Harris continued. "What surprises people is that the central tabulator is just a PC, like what you and I use. It's just a regular computer."

"So," Dean said, "anybody who can hack into a PC can hack into a central tabulator?"

Harris nodded affirmation, and pointed out how Diebold uses a program called GEMS, which fills the screen of the PC and effectively turns it into the central tabulator system. "This is the official program that the County Supervisor sees," she said, pointing to a PC that was sitting between them loaded with Diebold's software.

Bev then had Dean open the GEMS program to see the results of a test election. They went to the screen titled "Election Summary Report" and waited a moment while the PC "adds up all the votes from all the various precincts," and then saw that in this faux election Howard Dean had 1000 votes, Lex Luthor had 500, and Tiger Woods had none. Dean was winning.

"Of course, you can't tamper with this software," Harris noted. Diebold wrote a pretty good program.

But, it's running on a Windows PC.

So Harris had Dean close the Diebold GEMS software, go back to the normal Windows PC desktop, click on the "My Computer" icon, choose "Local Disk C:," open the folder titled GEMS, and open the sub-folder "LocalDB" which, Harris noted, "stands for local database, that's where they keep the votes." Harris then had Dean double-click on a file in that folder titled "Central Tabulator Votes," which caused the PC to open the vote count in a database program like Excel.

In the "Sum of the Candidates" row of numbers, she found that in one precinct Dean had

received 800 votes and Lex Luthor had gotten 400.

"Let's just flip those," Harris said, as Dean cut and pasted the numbers from one cell into the other. "And," she added magnanimously, "let's give 100 votes to Tiger."

They closed the database, went back into the official GEMS software "the legitimate way, you're the county supervisor and you're checking on the progress of your election."

As the screen displayed the official voter tabulation, Harris said, "And you can see now that Howard Dean has only 500 votes, Lex Luthor has 900, and Tiger Woods has 100." Dean, the winner, was now the loser.

Harris sat up a bit straighter, smiled, and said, "We just edited an election, and it took us 90 seconds."

On live national television. (You can see the clip on www.votergate.tv.) And they had left no tracks whatsoever, Harris said, noting that it would be nearly impossible for the election software – or a County election official - to know that the vote database had been altered.

Which brings us back to Morris and those pesky exit polls that had Karen Hughes telling George W. Bush that he'd lost the election in a landslide.

Morris's conspiracy theory is that the exit polls "were sabotage" to cause people in the western states to not bother voting for Bush, since the networks would call the election based on the exit polls for Kerry. But the networks didn't do that, and had never intended to.

According to congressional candidate Fisher, it makes far more sense that the exit polls were right - they weren't done on Diebold PCs - and that the vote itself was hacked.

And not only for the presidential candidate - Jeff Fisher thinks this hit him and pretty much every other Democratic candidate for national office in the most-hacked swing states.

So far, the only national "mainstream" media to come close to this story was Keith Olbermann on his show Friday night, November 5th, when he noted that it was curious that all the voting machine irregularities so far uncovered seem to favor Bush. In the meantime, the Washington Post and other media are now going through single-bullet-theory-like contortions to explain how the exit polls had failed.

But I agree with Fox's Dick Morris on this one, at least in large part. Wrapping up his story for The Hill, Morris wrote in his final paragraph, "This was no mere mistake. Exit polls cannot be as wrong across the board as they were on election night. I suspect foul play."

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