

Corporate Vote Theft & the Future of American Democracy

***Revised and Expanded to include
the 2012 Presidential Election***

By Bob Fittrakis, Harvey Wasserman

With Gerry Bello

Introduction by Greg Palast

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By Bob Fittrakis, Harvey Wasserman with Gerry Bello

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“We can afford to lose an election. We can’t afford to lose our democracy.”

--Rev. Jesse Jackson

Preface

Election protection, electronic voting & the future of America democracy

by Bob Fittrakis & Harvey Wasserman

The re-election of Barack Obama was made possible in part by the triumph of a new social movement---a great grassroots upheaval aimed at election protection and meaningful universal suffrage, that must include a transparent and reliable vote count.

The Republican Party's concerted effort to steal the presidency again failed in 2012, but only because of major breakthroughs that have been forcing their way into the mainstream since Florida 2000 and Ohio 2004.

Throughout these past dozen years, the GOP "suppress and shift" election theft strategy has focused on two main tactics: massive disenfranchisement of citizens (mostly non-white, poor and young) suspected of voting Democratic; and the manipulation of electronic voting machines and tabulating devices with software capable of flipping thousands of votes with a few late night keystrokes.

This year the Republicans' blatant, barely concealed disenfranchisement efforts evoked a major national outcry, and a significant backlash that carried all the way to the op-ed page of the *New York Times*. Because activists have focused on the issue since Florida 2000, there was in place a fast-growing awareness that millions of legitimate voters were being stripped from the registration rolls, especially in key swing states.

Less widely accepted has been the vulnerability of electronic voting machines. Manipulated tallies were used in Volusia County, Florida in 2000, and throughout Ohio in 2004 to elect and re-elect George W. Bush. In 2008 and 2012, Obama's popular vote margins were sufficient to overwhelm the potential theft in key swing states. But the possibilities of electronic vote theft are stronger than ever. In the long run, if the US is to ever have a meaningful democracy, electronic voting and tabulating machines must be eliminated in favor of universal hand counted paper ballots.

Systematic Disenfranchisement

Preventing unwanted voters from casting their ballots in key elections is a long-standing national tradition. It dates back at least to the Jim Crow days in the post-Civil War south, when the Democratic party and its terrorist wing, the Ku Klux Klan, systematically prevented African-Americans from voting in the eleven states of the former Confederacy, and elsewhere.

In Florida 2000 the Republicans used an old Jim Crow law disenfranchising former felons as a pretext for stripping the voter rolls of at least 90,000 voters. Most were African-American and Hispanic, and the vast majority weren't ex-felons at all, but people with same or similar names or the same date of birth to other citizens who may or may not have been ex-felons, and may or may not have been residents of Florida.

In Ohio 2004, more than 300,000 voters were stripped from registration rolls in heavily Democratic urban areas throughout state. In the city of Cleveland, nearly 25% of all voters were eliminated from the voting rolls. Also, Republican Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell deployed a wide range of deceptive tactics aimed at misleading voters and suppressing turnout. Democratic areas were shortchanged on voting machines and denied paper ballots. Tens of thousands of voters were forced to use provisional ballots which were then discarded.

Federal Judge Algernon Marbley in the King-Lincoln-Bronzeville suit, in which we are attorney and plaintiff, ordered Ohio's 88 county election boards to preserve their voter records for a statewide recount. But 56 of the counties illegally destroyed all or some of their election records. No prosecutions have resulted and no recount has ever been done.

After losing in 2008, even after purging 1.2 million voters from the rolls, the Republicans came into 2012 with a massively escalated campaign to suppress the vote. The 2012 purge of the registration rolls in Ohio topped 1.1 million voters. Led by Indiana and Georgia, GOP-controlled legislatures began passing laws demanding state-issued photo identification cards. New York University's Brennan Center estimated such laws could disenfranchise more than ten million voters.

Republican secretaries of state, especially in Ohio and Florida, worked hard to trim early voting opportunities for suspected Democrats. Once again inner city polling places were plagued with long lines and extended waits. But the worst happened during early voting in cities like Cincinnati and Cleveland, where Ohioans---mostly African-Americans---waited up to five hours to vote. Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted revived many of the tactics used by Blackwell, which were also adopted by GOP operatives in other states. Among other things, Husted would only allow one early voting center in the major urban areas, predictably creating long lines.

Corporate Vote Theft & the Future of American Democracy

Tens of thousands of voters were also forced to vote with provisional ballots. A disproportionate number were African-American. Many were tripped up by detailed demands imposed by Husted apparently designed to nullify as many votes as possible.

But this year the activist community was prepared. Heavily challenged in court, the photo ID laws were largely overturned. As in 2008, thousands of volunteers worked in key states to make sure people came out to the polls and to protect their rights once they did. Angered by the GOP tactics, thousands of nearly-disenfranchised voters made a point of waiting through hours of contrived delays to cast their ballots. Many were still standing in line to vote even as Barack Obama was proclaiming victory.

The Obama campaign and various voting rights groups challenged Husted in court over early voting hours, provisional ballot directives, and voter ID rules.

Overall, the response of the election protection movement was powerful and effective. Obama's re-election was essentially secured by a movement that prevented the Republicans from disenfranchising enough voters to guarantee their victory.

Electronic Vote Theft

But no turnout for Barack Obama or any other candidate could have withstood a full-scale electronic vote shift. Unlike the widely accepted understanding that massive disenfranchisement can swing an election, assertions focusing on electronic vote theft continue to arouse divisive passion.

Yet there remains a simple bottom line: there is absolutely no secure means of monitoring, confirming, recounting or legally challenging a vote count that has been registered and tabulated electronically. In reality, our entire electoral system is sitting duck, and is far more vulnerable to electronic manipulation than it was in 2000.

Back then, at a critical moment on election night, 16,000 electronic votes from Volusia County, Florida, were deleted from Al Gore and 4,000 added to George W. Bush. Though the count was later reversed, Fox News commentator John Ellis---Bush's first cousin---used the shift to reverse pronouncements that Gore had won the election.

In Ohio 2004, which would decide the presidency, CNN reported shortly after 11pm that John Kerry had defeated Bush by more than 200,000 votes. But at 11:14 pm the electronic tally was shifted to a computer bank in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Soon thereafter the lead definitively shifted to Bush, who officially won the state--and thus the presidency---by some 118,000 votes. The exit polls clearly showed Kerry winning.

Secretary of State Blackwell's no-bid contract for the Ohio 2004 electronic vote count had been awarded to the Akron-based GovTech Corporation. Its founder, Michael Connell, was a long-standing associate of the Bush Family. Connell ran the GOP's lead IT company, New Media. New Media processed Ohio's votes through a server farm in Chattanooga, which also housed the email of the Republican National Committee, and of Karl Rove. The owner of the server farm was born-again political activist Jeff Averbek of Smartech.

On November 3, 2008, Connell was deposed in Cleveland by attorneys Fitakis and Cliff Arnebeck as part of the King-Lincoln federal lawsuit. Questioning focused on his possible role in electronically flipping the 2004 Ohio vote count. On December 19, while facing a follow-up deposition, Connell died in a mysterious private plane crash.

By then it had become clear that no recount of the Ohio 2004 election would be possible. Judge Marbley had issued a decision requiring that all 88 county election boards preserve all balloting records from Ohio 2004. But when Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner went to collect them, she discovered that 56 of the 88 counties had violated Marbley's ruling. Accompanied by a series of widely varying excuses, the boards of election had made it impossible to track the true presidential vote count in the deciding state in one of America's most bitterly contested elections.

In 2012, the GOP was prepared to repeat history. For a decade the Help America Vote Act had been spreading electronic voting machines throughout the US. More than half the nation's votes were cast and/or counted this year on electronic devices. Yet the courts have ruled that the software on these machines is proprietary, meaning the public has no access to how they are coded, or how the votes are counted.

In Ohio, nearly all 2012 votes were cast and counted electronically. The Free Press reported that in Cincinnati, the notoriously insecure and unreliable Hart InterCivic voting machines were deployed by a company, HIG Capital, controlled by major Romney campaign associates who are investment partners with Romney family members.

The widespread belief that Ohio could decide the presidential outcome helped make that Free Press story go viral.

Just prior to Election Day, documents leaked to the Free Press from the Ohio Secretary of State's office confirmed that an uncertified and untested software patch had been appended to ES&S machines on which 80% of the state's votes would be cast and transmitted. The software had no safeguards to prevent an inside party from altering the vote count.

Further Free Press research uncovered the operations of Scytl, a Spanish-owned company hired by a number of states to manage the overseas electronic vote count. But Scytl's software was also capable of manipulating the vote count in entire states, again without meaningful public access or recourse.

As Election Day approached, Democrats complained that touch screen machines had them pushing the button for Barack Obama while seeing Mitt Romney light up. In Colorado, Republicans claimed they were pushing Mitt Romney's name while Barack Obama lit up. The complaints resembled those in Youngstown, Ohio 2004, where voters complained they were attempting to vote for John Kerry while George W. Bush's name lit up. Mahoning County election officials in Youngstown, Ohio explained that the vote flipping was "only" happening on 31 machines.

This year, amidst saturation election night coverage, Karl Rove urged Fox reporters to refrain from calling Ohio for Barack Obama. Rove's confused, angry outburst mentioned crashing websites run by the Ohio Secretary of State, and seemed to mirror the fateful Foxist backtracking of Bush cousin John Ellis in Florida 2000.

As in 2008, Barack Obama's wide margin put the 2012 election out of reach of electronic vote theft. He could have lost Florida, Ohio and Virginia and still won in the Electoral College.

But the outcome in a close election might well have been different. Both Ohio and Florida were vulnerable to electronic flipping by the Republican governors and secretaries of state that controlled the electoral apparatus in both states. In a close election, they could easily have put Mitt Romney in the White House.

The electorate and much of the media reacted this year with great anger to the GOP's national disenfranchisement campaign. Many people who came out to vote and stayed in long lines voiced angry defiance of the Republican attempt to deny them the right to do so.

But the reaction to the possibility of electronic vote theft has been muted and even hostile. The official lie propagated by the Democratic Party and their apologists is that there has not been a single case of vote tampering. In fact there have been hundreds of such cases (once case in point comes in a 17-page Free Press report (at freepress.org) documenting phantom electronic votes in Miami County, Ohio). Some Democrats worried openly that talk of the possibility of electronic vote theft might discourage people from voting at all.

Clearly this didn't happen in 2008 or 2012. But it's also clear that the vulnerability of electronic voting continues to put our democracy at profound risk. Until it is done away with altogether, and replaced with universal hand-counted paper balloting, the sanctity and reliability of our vote counts is moot.

The grassroots election protection movement that has arisen to deal with these issues has attained significant nationwide status. Given its popular momentum and gravity of the cause, it seems destined to take a place among the great political campaigns of our time.

It has already won some tangible victories. US Attorney-General Eric Holder has now endorsed automatic universal voter registration. The palpable anger over GOP attempts at mass disenfranchisement will not soon be forgotten. There is much new talk---nowhere near powerful enough---about abolishing the Electoral College. And the potential for electronic vote theft is at least being discussed as never before. Hard hitting reports by Forbes.com, among others, were accurate and admirable throughout the 2012 election cycle.

But there are also disturbing developments on the horizon. The courts continue to rule that software on electronic voting machines is proprietary, and thus beyond the control of scrutiny of the public. Thus we are still prey to having our public elections controlled by private corporations.

And in response to another round of long lines and voter disenfranchisement, there is talk of "convenience voting" by internet and cellphone. These are terrible ideas, as they can never be secured and are even more vulnerable to hacking than the touchscreen machines now in place.

So the public has no access, no guarantees, no recourse. The veracity of our electoral vote counts remain a blind item. Though Barack Obama won this election, other down-ticket races---past, present and future---may well have been manipulated.

For example, California's bitterly contested referendum on GMO food labeling is still being subjected to a detailed recount. Mathematicians and social scientists are now reporting unexplained patterns of vote shifting that appear to be based on the size of precincts. The larger the precinct, the more the vote differs from the predicted norm.

Over the coming years, this new grassroots election protection movement will battle it out over the life-and-death issue of the integrity of our voting process. Banning money from politics, abolishing the Electoral College, automatic universal voter registration, universal hand-counted paper ballots, easier access to voting, the removal of partisan private for-profit companies and more will be at its core.

Corporate Vote Theft & the Future of American Democracy

But even at this young age, the movement has played a critical role in electing and re-electing a president, and in preserving the integrity of countless elections, with an eye toward a vastly reformed system.

Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Japan and Canada all use universal hand-counted paper ballots. Ireland has just pitched its electronic machines to do the same.

That and a few other key democratic reforms would be a dream come true for this new movement. As election protection activists, we will be proud to watch that happen here in the United States as well.

Contents:

Preface	v
Election protection, electronic voting & the future of America democracy	
by Bob Fittrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
Introduction	1
by Greg Palast	
PART ONE:	3
Bracing for 2012	
PART TWO:	6
Six Keys to a Stolen Election	
PART THREE:	13
A Brief History of our Stolen Elections, 1800-2008	
PART FOUR:	20
A Critical Anthology, 2000-2012	
Twelve ways Bush is now stealing the Ohio vote	23
by Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman	
October 27, 2004	
 A Catalog: How The GOP Stole America's 2004 Election... ..	25
by Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman	
 WINNING BACK OUR DEMOCRACY	
For the Growing Election Protection Movement: Honor Every Voter; Count	72
Every Vote	
by Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman	
 With a limp election theft report, Dems prove why they're unworthy	78
by Harvey Wasserman and Bob Fittrakis	
June 28, 2005	
 As Alito takes Supreme Court seat, Ohio GOP guts election protection	80
by Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman	
February 1, 2006	
 Did 308,000 cancelled Ohio voter registrations put Bush back in the White House?	82
by Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman	
February 28, 2006	

Corporate Vote Theft & the Future of American Democracy

Why did J. Kenneth Blackwell seek, then hide, his association with super-rich extremists and e-voting magnates? by Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman March 10, 2006	84
Is the Mainstream Media finally getting half the rigged voting machine story? by Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman March 29, 2006	87
Shocking Diebold conflict of interest revelations from Secretary of State further taint Ohio's electoral credibility by Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman April 6, 2006	88
Are mainstream churches finally standing up to the GOP's hateful "Christian" blitzkrieg? by Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman April 9, 2006	90
Ohio 2004 election thief grabs Gov nod while (surprise! surprise!) voting machines malfunction by Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman May 5, 2006	92
RFK and Rolling Stone nail Ohio's stolen 2004 election, but much more must be done by Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman June 3, 2006	94
The Democrats must now say "We Do Not Concede" in the U.S. as it's being said in Mexico by Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman July 9, 2006	95
An open letter from Ohio to the people of Mexico by Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman July 13, 2006	97

Bob Fitrakis, Harvey Wasserman with Gerry Bello

Saving the ballot evidence from Ohio 2004	98
by Bob Fitrakis and Harvey Wasserman	
September 2, 2006	
Court victory lets preserved Ohio 2004 ballots tell new tales of theft and fraud as	100
indictments and convictions mount	
by Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
September 25, 2006	
The power of a social movement can beat the GOP double Chickenhawks	103
by Bob Fitrakis and Harvey Wasserman	
November 2, 2006	
Tuesday's outcome may depend on the power of the election protection movement	105
by Bob Fitrakis and Harvey Wasserman	
November 5, 2006	
A monumental victory for the election protection movement	107
by Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
November 8, 2006	
Ohio's spreading stolen 2004 election scandal claims another victim	109
by Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
February 10, 2007	
Forced resignations and stiff prison sentences intensify the escalating blowback	110
from Ohio's 2004 stolen election	
by Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
March 20, 2007	
Explosive new vote fraud developments continue to rock Ohio and Florida	112
by Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
March 23, 2007	
Two big victories boost Ohio's election protection movement	114
by Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
April 5, 2007	

Corporate Vote Theft & the Future of American Democracy

Are Rove's missing e-mails the smoking guns of the stolen 2004 election?	116
by Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman	
April 25, 2007	
The globalization of electronic election theft	119
by Bob Fittrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
May 11, 2007	
Will Al Gore face his inconvenient truths about our stolen elections?	121
by Bob Fittrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
May 18, 2007	
Sausage making and electronic voting machines	123
by Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman	
July 27, 2007	
The criminal cover-up of Ohio's stolen 2004 election sinks to the fraudulent, the	125
absurd, the pathetic	
by Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman	
August 2, 2007	
Ohio Secretary of State confirms 2004 election could have been stolen	129
by Bob Fittrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
December 14, 2007	
The Kudzu Effect: The Voting-Industrial Complex chokes our democracy	131
by Sheri Myers, Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman	
January 6, 2008	
Bob & Harvey's 3-Step "Ohio Plan" for fair and reliable voting and vote counts	132
by Bob Fittrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
January 16, 2008	
Ohio's voting machines are now an official crime scene	135
by Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman	
March 17, 2008	

Bob Fitrakis, Harvey Wasserman with Gerry Bello

Obama must learn from Kucinich's election theft impeachment	137
by Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
June 11, 2008	
Three key ways YOU can help protect the 2008 election	138
by Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
July 3, 2008	
Why hurricane Ike demands paper ballots on November 4	140
by Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
September 17, 2008	
Critical US Supreme Court ruling against Rovian GOP vote meddling may	141
prove temporary	
by Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
October 20, 2008	
Beware the Twin Towers of electronic election theft	144
by Bob Fitrakis and Harvey Wasserman	
October 30, 2008	
Can the grassroots Internet-based election protection movement win the	146
White House?	
by Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
November 3, 2008	
Election protection in Ohio (and America) isn't over	147
by Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
November 17, 2008	
The GOP attack on democracy continues in Ohio	150
by Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
November 19, 2008	
The suspicious, disturbing death of election rigger Michael Connell	151
by Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
December 20, 2008	

Corporate Vote Theft & the Future of American Democracy

Why Al Franken should NOT be riding private planes	152
by Bob Fittrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
December 23, 2008	
 OOPS! We rigged the Iran/Florida-Ohio vote count AGAIN!!	154
by Bob Fittrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
June 23, 2009	
 Your electronic vote in the 2010 election has just been bought	155
by Bob Fittrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
September 24, 2009	
 Election Summit summary: What really happened in Ohio in 2008	157
by Bob Fittrakis	
November 16, 2009	
 Will Diebold steal Ted Kennedy's seat – and the Senate?	159
by Bob Fittrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
January 18, 2010	
 Visualize Karl Rove's election theft subpoena	161
by Bob Fittrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
October 26, 2010	
 How & why we have filed racketeering charges against Karl Rove's election	162
operations	
by Bob Fittrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
October 29, 2010	
 Ohio Chamber lies & hides election buys	163
by Bob Fittrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
November 2, 2010	
 Will Karl Rove bury the record of his 2004 election theft?	165
by Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman	
January 10, 2011	

Bob Fitrakis, Harvey Wasserman with Gerry Bello

The Ohio Republican Party is poised to steal the 2012 vote in Ohio	166
by Bob Fitrakis and Harvey Wasserman	
July 4, 2011	
New court filing reveals how the 2004 Ohio presidential election was hacked	168
by Bob Fitrakis	
July 20, 2011	
Can we transform labor's Buckeye victory into a new era of election protection?	170
by Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
November 12, 2011	
Has America's stolen election process finally hit prime time?	172
by Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman	
December 29, 2011	
The Free Press uncovers one million voters purged in Ohio	174
By Bob Fitrakis and Harvey Wasserman	
April 15, 2012	
The new Jim Crow: Massive disenfranchisement returns.....	180
by <i>Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman</i>	
July 30, 2012	
Four ways the Ohio GOP is already stealing the 2012 election.....	183
by <i>Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman</i>	
August 25, 2012	
Will the GOP steal America's 2012 election?.....	185
by <i>Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman</i>	
September 6, 2012	
Who owns ScytI? George Soros isn't in the voting machines, but the intelligence community is	187
by <i>Gerry Bello</i>	
September 18, 2012	

Corporate Vote Theft & the Future of American Democracy

Will 9 GOP governors electronically flip Romney into the White House?	189
by <i>Bob Fittrakis & Harvey Wasserman</i>	
September 25, 2012	
Vote counting company tied to Romney	192
by <i>Gerry Bello & Bob Fittrakis</i>	
September 27, 2012	
Why are legal scholars dismissing election fraud?: Manufactured skepticism and exit polls	193
by <i>Gerry Bello and Bob Fittrakis</i>	
October 21, 2012	
Election software company Scytl on the run from the Free Press, from one fake address to the next	195
by <i>Gerry Bello and Bob Fittrakis</i>	
October 22, 2012	
Romney family and friends will help tabulate the vote count in Cincinnati: Hart Intercivic holds	197
maintenance contracts on their own machines	
by <i>Gerry Bello and Bob Fittrakis</i>	
October 24, 2012	
Partisan lies about the security of Hart e-voting machines continue to flow from Hamilton County	199
by <i>Gerry Bello and Bob Fittrakis</i>	
October 25, 2012	
Will “experimental” software patches affect the Ohio vote?	200
by <i>Bob Fittrakis and Gerry Bello</i>	
October 31, 2012	
The Free Press confirms installation, secret justification of uncertified last minute election	202
tabulation reporting software in Ohio	
by <i>Gerry Bello and Bob Fittrakis</i>	
November 2, 2012	
The electronic architecture of voter suppression	203
by <i>Gerry Bello and Bob Fittrakis</i>	
November 4, 2012	

Bob Fittrakis, Harvey Wasserman with Gerry Bello

Invoices prove Romney-related voting company Hart InterCivic does maintenance on Cincinnati voting machines by <i>Gerry Bello and Bob Fittrakis</i> November 5, 2012	205
Another Husted dirty trick in Ohio: Secretary of State's Office admits direct reporting function of untested election software by <i>Gerry Bello and Bob Fittrakis</i> November 5, 2012	206
An Election Protection Agenda for 2016 by <i>Bob Fittrakis & Harvey Wasserman</i> November 9, 2012	207
Why Rove failed to deliver Ohio on Election Day: What happened in Ohio – this time around By <i>Bob Fittrakis</i> November 12, 2012	208
Romney may have lost, but the voting system is still broken by <i>Gerry Bello and Bob Fittrakis</i> November 20, 2012	210
Election Protection Observers point out how the system is broken in Ohio by <i>Bob Fittrakis</i> December 15, 2012	212
Diseased racist voting system needs a cure by <i>Bob Fittrakis</i> February 18, 2013	213
Response to Supreme Court with push for new voting rights laws, amendments by <i>Bob Fittrakis</i> June 26, 2013	214
Acknowledgements	215
About Bob Fittrakis	216

Corporate Vote Theft & the Future of American Democracy

About Harvey Wasserman	217
About Gerry Bello	218
Colonels in Mirrored Sunglasses	219

Introduction

by Greg Palast

There's something really, really weird about Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman.

Sensible Americans were doing everything in their power this summer to avoid all thought of the Presidential election, its icky choices, its barf-making ads, the chatter-heads and chuckle-heads on TV spewing brain-cell killing bromides and the parade of officious ponces who call themselves "elected officials" and the wannabe electeds--while Bob and Harvey worked like dogs to protect Our Democracy.

Are they delusional zealots? Heroic heralds of the death of our freedoms? Two guys with oozing envy of billionaires and their trophy senators? Paul Reveres of the internet screeching, *The Republicans are coming! The Republicans are coming!?* Conspiracy freaks who think that Karl Rove has your ballot locked away in Dick Cheney's bunker?

After reading through, "*Corporate Vote Theft & the Future of American Democracy*" I am knocked over by their erudition, authoritative analysis, stunning and ill-making revelations and irrefutable evidence of a national emergency: Grand Theft Election.

Political science professor and attorney Fittrakis and historian Wasserman know their stuff--and you should know it too.

I've been in the election theft biz a long time --that is, reporting on the schemers and scammers who jack with your ballot, your registration and your government. It started in 2000 when Al Gore was down for the count against George W. Bush and I got my hands on a set of computer disks from the office of the Secretary of State of Florida, Katherine Harris. Harris had tagged 94,000 citizens for removal from the voter rolls. She called them, "felons," but every one, I mean *every one*, was innocent, though most were guilty of VWB: Voting While Black.

That's when I encountered Professors Fittrakis' and Wasserman's first work into the too-many ways in which ballot bandits can eliminate your registration, hang your chad and throw your vote into the garbage-sometimes legally, sometimes not, but always, always, stealing away the last power--voting--of the poor, the dark-skinned, the young and the learned (students get messed with a lot at polling places).

Despite its title, this is not a partisan book. I've known these two scholars and investigative reporters a long time and never heard a kind word about the Democrats leave their lips or pens. But they're honest reporters and they honestly must report that in 2012, the disenfranchisement game has now become the tool of Republicans to go after the least among us in an racially poisonous, class-biased attack on voting rights.

Voters of color, students and the unemployed are not voting the choice of the Country Club this year--so the ballot bandits see them not as voters to convince but as voters to blockade. The billionaires' weapons include new crazy new ID requirements--and, of course, more felon purges. (Fittrakis and Wasserman uncover Ohio's purge of felon voters from registries -- although ex-cons are allowed to vote in Ohio!)

Indeed, historian Wasserman is quick to lay out the sordid history of vote theft by the Democratic Party (it was the Democrats who came up with the original Jim Crow laws removing "felons" from voter rolls). I have to say I was shocked (that does not happen often) to read here about the number of elections, *beginning with Thomas Jefferson's*, bent by a crooked voting system.

I am flattered and chuffed (a British-ism--you can look it up) to find my own investigative findings cited in this volume. Here's one: Did you know that in the last Presidential election, 1,451,116 ballots were "spoiled," not counted--and 54% of those were cast by African-Americans? Well, now you do.

So, what are you going to do about it?

First, you're going to read this book, then you're going to go to www.FreePress.org to get the latest from these searchers for truth. Then you'll go to www.BallotBandits.org to join up with 200 other media and action resource organizations.

This book, this new Civil Rights Movement, is not about stopping Republicans from winning office -- hell, go and vote for Romney or his mommy-- it's about stopping *vote theft*.

One of my heroes is US Navy Captain David Iglesias, former US Attorney for New Mexico. Iglesias, one of the models for the Tom Cruise character in *A Few Good Men*, is a stalwart Republican who wants his party to win elections. But what he doesn't want is for his party to *steal* elections -- and that is what Karl Rove, Senior Counsel to then-President George Bush, wanted him to do. When the Captain wouldn't go along with phony arrests of "fraudulent" voters, Rove had Bush fire Iglesias.

Captain Iglesias was not standing up for Democrats, but for *democracy*. To Iglesias, and to Fittrakis and Wasserman, the future

Corporate Vote Theft & the Future of American Democracy

of our imperiled democracy is worth their blood, sweat, tears and toil. And now we need yours.

This book's title, *Will the GOP Steal America's 2012 Election?* is a question ... for *you*. It's up to *you* to prevent theft. Get informed, then put on a badge. If you don't join the Democracy posse, who will?

Greg Palast has reported on elections theft for BBC Television London, The Guardian, Harper's, Rolling Stone, and The Nation.

Palast's latest book, which includes a 48-page comic book by Ted Rall, is

Billionaires & Ballot Bandits: How to Steal an Election in 9 Easy Steps.

It will be released on September 18. For more info, go to www.BallotBandits.org

An excerpt of *Billionaires & Ballot Bandits* appears as the Afterword of this book.

PART ONE:

Bracing for 2012

The Republican Party could steal the 2012 US Presidential election with relative ease.

The purpose of this book is to show how, and to dissect the larger--potentially fatal---warning signs for American democracy, no matter which corporate party is doing the stealing.

Six basic factors make this year's theft a possibility:

1. **The power of corporate money, now vastly enhanced by the US Supreme Court's *Citizens' United* decisions;**
2. **The Electoral College, which narrows the number of votes needed to be moved to swing a presidential election;**
3. **The systematic disenfranchisement of---according to the Brennan Center---ten million or more citizens (a million in Ohio alone), most of whom would otherwise be likely to vote Democratic;**
4. **The accelerating use of electronic voting machines, which make election theft a relatively simple task for those who control them, including their owners and operators, who are predominantly Republican;**
5. **The GOP control of nine of the governorships in the dozen swing states that will decide the outcome of the 2012 campaign; and,**
6. **The likelihood that the core of the activist "election protection" community that turned out in droves to monitor the vote for Barack Obama in 2008 has not been energized by his presidency and is thus unlikely to work for him again in 2012.**

We believe these problems can be solved. A fair and reliable electoral system can be achieved in this country. But it will take a huge shift in the balance of power that can only be won with a massive grassroots upheaval. So at the end of this section we also offer six basic steps key to that victory.

In the meantime, there is no arguing the power of money in American politics. In at least 90% of our Congressional races and at least 80% of our US Senate races, the candidate who spends the most money wins.

<http://www.opensecrets.org/news/2008/11/money-wins-white-houseand.html>

From the presidency to the local level, our elections---and thus control of our government---are dominated by cash.

For more than a century, the ability of corporations and the super-rich to buy in directly has been legally constrained. But the concentration of media ownership in the hands of ever-fewer corporations has vastly enhanced their power.

Already in 2012, the tsunami of dollars pouring in from corporations and super-rich individuals has soared to entirely new levels. With its June decision denying Montana's attempt to keep some spending restrictions in tact, the John Roberts US Supreme Court has inaugurated an era in which virtually unrestrained "pay-to-play" money will re-define the electoral process. Republicans in the US Senate have also blocked attempts to require that these campaign "donations" be made public.

It's not hard to guess where this leads. The June, 2012, recall election in Wisconsin saw at least 8 times as much money being spent on protecting Republican governor Scott Walker as was spent to oust him.

Barack Obama has spent much of his presidency courting corporate interests. But he will be out-raised by the corporate/super-rich 1% backing Mitt Romney. A handful of high-profile billionaires will spend "whatever it takes" to put the GOP back into the White House. Just a dozen of them have already provided more than 70% of Romney's early campaign budget.

Most of this corporate money is being used to persuade voters to oust Obama, which they may well decide to do. But US history shows that some of it can also restrict the ability of Americans to vote. It can then "bend" the vote count in ways the public may not want.

Our nation's history shows that given the same chance, the Democrats would gladly do the same to the Republicans. And it's happened many times, especially in the Jim Crow south.

But in 2012, it will be primarily Republicans using gargantuan sums of corporate money to take control of the government from Democrats, and democracy be damned.

For us, the more important reality is that this electoral corruption dooms the ballot as an instrument of real democracy. A system this badly broken means a bi-partisan oligarchy can always deny third and other grassroots parties the use of elections to challenge the status quo, in this case one increasingly defined by war, bigotry, injustice, moneyed privilege and ecological suicide.

Corporate Vote Theft & the Future of American Democracy

Thus it's been a century since the last significant electoral challenges to the Democrat-Republican corporate domination of the political system.

That challenge was staged by the People's (Populist) and then Socialist Parties. In rapid succession they rallied huge grassroots followings demanding core changes to the corporate domination of American politics. The 30-year upheaval they represented laid the groundwork for major changes. But it failed to crack the corporate domination of our political system.

The Populists were shattered in 1896 with a combination of co-option by William Jennings Bryan's Democratic Party and election theft engineered by Mark Hanna's Republicans. (Republican strategist Karl Rove, a serious student of the 1896 election, considers Mark Hanna to be one of his great heroes).

The Socialists were co-opted and divided in 1916 by the Democrat Woodrow Wilson, who then crushed them in the most violent wave of physical repression ever imposed by a US President on a mass movement that derived from the heart of America's working public.

No third party has since risen up with enough real political clout to threaten corporate power through the electoral system. As long as our ballot box is corrupted and unaccountable, none will.

So as we trace the stories of election theft dating back to John Adams and Tom Jefferson in 1800, we do fret over the corruption that defines so much of the back-and-forth between Democrats and Republicans. That one party could steal an election from the other means our democracy, if it could still be called that, is essentially in shambles.

But we hold first in mind that that whatever the corporate parties do to each other separately---as the GOP is likely to do to the Democrats this year--- pales before what they can and will do in concert to crush grassroots movements aimed at challenging the core assumptions of the status quo: ie, winning peace, justice, corporate accountability and ecological preservation. This applies to candidates running for office and---as in Ohio 2005---to referenda meant to directly change corporate policy.

So we are here to show that the money the corporate/super-rich is pouring into this campaign could easily suffice to steal the 2012 election.

And that the ability of either (or both) corporate parties to do this means no grassroots party will be allowed to force meaningful change in America---at least not through the ballot box.

No reality could be more grim for a nation that long-ago pioneered modern democracy. In 1776 American revolutionaries aimed to bring the world a country where the ability to make meaningful, life-giving change was guaranteed.

It was assumed by the grassroots farmers and workers who won the Revolution that change in the future would be won through the ballot box.

But day that process has been thoroughly corrupted.

This is a truly dangerous, debilitating reality.

But we are citizens of a nation born with the bottom-up overthrow of the planet's then-most powerful king. As believers in grassroots democracy, we know that the survival instinct is ultimately more powerful than the profit motive. When it comes to the basics, we have no doubt the power of the people will ultimately prevail.

So:

- 1. Money must come out of politics. No nation can allow a tiny handful of million/billionaire corporatists to pour unlimited cash into our elections and expect to emerge with even a semblance of democracy. If elections can be bought, so can our government, to the detriment of us all. *Citizens United* must be reversed, corporations must be stripped of legal personhood, and money must be banned from the electoral process. This will take an unprecedented nation-wide grassroots campaign resulting in at least one Constitutional amendment. The odds may seem daunting. But George III was not Divine, and corporations are not people.**
- 2. Elections cannot be administered by partisans. All local, state and federal election officials must be banned from playing any role in any campaign relating to the election they are administering. A strict non-partisanship must apply to establishing congressional districts and all other aspects of our democratic process**
- 3. All American citizens must be automatically registered to vote upon turning 18. The arduous, unfair practice of forcing pro-democracy organizations to go out and register voters is nonsensical. Voting is an inherent natural right and responsibility. Citizens should be removed from voter rolls only upon death or renunciation of citizenship.**
- 4. All places of voting must be convenient, stable, well-known and easily accessible.**
- 5. Voting should be available over a period of weeks by mail, and at polling stations through the Friday-Saturday-Sunday-**

Monday around Armistice Day, November 11. The polls should be largely worked by high school and college students who will get school credit for the day, and who will get a holiday that Tuesday to count the ballots.

6. All electronic voting and counting machines should be banned (as Ireland has just done, and as has long been the case in Canada, Japan, Germany and elsewhere) with all ballots cast on recycled paper, to be hand-counted.

Achieving all that demands as great an effort as the American people have ever put forward. But the alternative is a corporate dictatorship that would make the East India Tea Company seem like a hippie-run non-profit.

To put it mildly, the current situation is not sustainable---politically, economically, ecologically, in terms of our basic way of life or the illusion of democracy.

In the coming chapters, we'll dissect the key forces behind this nightmare.

But grim as it seems, we have ultimate faith in the ability of the American people to turn this around, or we wouldn't be writing this.

PART TWO:

Six Keys to a Stolen Election

1. Corporate personhood, *Citizen's United* and the tsunami of corporate cash:

Money has been a factor in American politics since the beginning of the Republic.

But the power of the dollar in running our government took on an entirely new aspect with the end of the Civil War and the birth of the modern industrial corporation.

The ascent of the industrial Robber Barons led to huge concentrations of cash which has ever since allowed them to manipulate the White House, Congress and all levels of government.

No formal Supreme Court decision actually enshrined the idea that corporations are entitled to personhood, but beginning in the 1880s it seeped into American jurisprudence. As we shall see, Big Money has used a combination of electoral manipulation and outright suppression to keep Populist, Socialist, green and other grassroots rebellions at bay.

Along the way there's been legislation banning direct corporate contributions to political campaigns. Though the power of money remained a major political force throughout the 20th century, there were some restraints on both the state and federal level.

No more. In 2010 the John Roberts Supreme Court explicitly granted human rights (but no human responsibilities) to corporations and equated direct campaign expenditures with freedom of speech.

The word "corporation" appears nowhere in the US Constitution. There's no evidence the Founders wanted them enshrined as the new nation's dominant institution. As early as 1816 Thomas Jefferson railed against such a danger, as would Abraham Lincoln.

But a 5-4 decision has set corporate power above that of the public. In June, 2012, the Court---again 5-4---went even further, overturning a century-old Montana law, in essence telling the states and localities that they, too, have no right to restrict the power of money in their political process. Republicans in the US Senate have defeated attempts to require public disclosure of the "donations" that so deeply affect our government

<http://www.nationofchange.org/presto-disclose-actdisappears-1342617922>.

Thus 2012 will be the first election in which millionaires and billionaires will enjoy a "one dollar, one vote" privilege, with no legal constraints. And in a pay-to-play system, from Tammany Hall to Mark Hannah to Karl Rove, winning is everything.

This year a mere dozen super-rich individuals contributed more than 70% of the cash collected for Mitt Romney's early campaign. Billionaires like Sheldon Adelson and the Koch Brothers have vowed to spend "whatever it takes" to move the GOP back into the White House.

Barack Obama's profoundly corporate presidency has alienated his core constituency (Point 6). But the corporate elite still won't back him over Mitt Romney. As push has come to shove throughout our history (with the exception of Franklin Roosevelt) the ultra-rich will always favor one of their own.

So in 2012, Big Money will buy the GOP a huge advantage in shaping public opinion. We can expect hundreds of millions of dollars to be spent on a tsunami of media in the last weeks of the campaign, most of it aimed at making a GOP/Romney presidency appear all but inevitable.

And...there will be plenty left over to restrict access to the polls, shape the vote count and help guarantee whatever outcome the corporations want. Despite his incumbency, we estimate that Barack Obama enters this campaign down a "gentleman's handicap" of 5-10% of the vote count.

With the right circumstances, grassroots movements can certainly overcome the power of money. It happens all the time. We would not otherwise exist as a nation. Sooner or later, one way or the other, America's working people will find a way to take back control of our lives and our government.

But in 2012, the corporate Democrats have turned their back on the grassroots fire that put Barack Obama in the White House. The activists that worked so hard for him in 2008 may vote for him again. But the electoral system remains unreformed. And the hard core that overcame that in 2008 will not be back in 2012 to do the day-to-day grunt work it took to win four years ago.

So the GOP's billions now tower over the political landscape and dominate the electoral process, no holds barred. In ways never seen prior to *Citizen's United* and the advent of electronic voting machines, big money is already defining this election.

2. The Electoral College: Child of Slavery, Godfather of Stolen Elections

The primary function of today's Electoral College is to facilitate the theft of presidential elections.