

12-7-2016

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Jana Nestlerode

West Chester University of Pennsylvania, jnestlerode@wcupa.edu

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Recommended Citation

Nestlerode, J. (2016). Questions About Election Fraud. *Election Integrity* Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.wcupa.edu/crimjust_facpub/5

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QUESTIONS ABOUT ELECTION FRAUD

Aside posted on [December 8, 2016](#) by [Moderator](#)

By Jana Nestlerode Dec. 7, 2016

What is election fraud?

When we talk about “election fraud” we’re talking about electronic manipulation of computer-counted vote totals. It’s not to be confused with “vote fraud” which may involve voting more than once in an election, impersonating a dead voter to cast a ballot, registration of a person not eligible to vote, etc.

Should I be worried about vote fraud?

Not really. It’s pretty rare, and when it does happen it can hardly affect the outcome of an election. Vote fraud is relatively easy to detect and stop, but even if the fraud is not caught, it can’t affect that many votes.

Should I be worried about election fraud?

Yes, you should be very worried about election fraud. The electronic manipulation of votes can affect thousands of votes at one time, and can readily change the outcome of an election.

But I trust the poll workers in my precinct. They wouldn't do anything like that.

Poll workers may be honest hard-working patriotic citizens who would never manipulate the vote totals. But if someone did hack the machines, they wouldn't know. In fact, they would have no way of knowing. They may honestly believe the reported vote totals are accurate, when in fact they could be fraudulent.

But how could that happen without their knowledge?

Well, voting machines left unattended for even a few minutes can be infected with a virus that will alter the vote totals. It could be anyone, not just a poll worker. It could be a janitor, a high school student, a technician brought in to service the machines – anyone, really. It could also be individuals working for the machine manufacturers. It would be easy for programmers or hackers there to program the machines to tally the votes so that a preferred candidate wins. Again, the pollworkers would never know.

Is there any evidence that the machine manufacturer might do something like this?

Well, some have been openly partisan and have made their preferences known.

Is that all? Is there other evidence?

Lots. Walden O'Dell, the CEO of Diebold, sent out a political fundraising letter saying he was going to do

everything he could to make sure Bush won Ohio. Diebold also hired a programmer who had been convicted of twenty-three counts of felony theft. He had used computerized accounting system to commit those crimes. Chuck Hagel won a Senate seat against all odds in Nebraska. Until two weeks before he announced his candidacy, he ran the company that made the machines that would be counting the votes in his state. There were inexplicable upsets in Georgia where six democratic incumbents lost to republicans. Investigators later found software embedded in Diebold's systems with the ironic name "rob-georgia".

This is awful. So someone would have to have access to the voting machine – but if only one machine is affected, that can't alter that many votes can it?

Unfortunately, the infection of one machine can infect other voting tabulators.

But my precinct leader says there can be no fraud because their machines aren't connected to the internet.

That really doesn't matter. Let's say a nefarious person wanted to steal a Presidential election in Pennsylvania. All s/he would have to do is have access to any one of the thousands of voting machines in the state for a few minutes. That person could insert a virus-infected card reader into the machine for about one minute. The virus would then infect that machine's internal card reader. At the end of the voting day, the poll worker takes

the infected card reader physically to the central tabulator located in the county seat. That infected card reader is inserted into the county tabulator and now the county tabulator is infected. The county tabulator will electronically deliver the results for that county to the Secretary of State. Now the Secretary of State's tabulator is infected.

What would the virus actually do?

It could do any number of things. It could just direct the computation of the final tabulation to make sure that a particular candidate wins. To avoid being caught, the virus would make sure that the total vote count didn't exceed the total number of votes cast. The virus could be programmed so that the winner's margin was large enough to ensure the win, but not trigger an audit or a state-mandated recount. For instance, some states will order a recount if the margin of votes between the candidates is less than one half of one percent.

But couldn't we detect such a virus?

Probably not. The hacker who programmed the virus could tell the virus to delete itself at the end of the voting day. Even if that did not occur, the manufacturers of these machines refuse to permit a forensic examination of their machines. Election officials, too, are reluctant to order any forensic examinations of the machines.

Are there other ways that an election could be electronically stolen?

Yes. There's something called a man-in-the-middle hack. A hacker would only need the IP address of the computer in a county election board's office, and the IP address of the computer in the state's Secretary of State Office. The hacker can then insert himself into the "conversation". From a remote location, he can "pretend" to be the SOS talking to the county, or he can pretend to be the county talking to the SOS. That way he can alter the vote tallies at both ends ... at the county tabulator and at the Secretary of State's computer.

But, geez, would anyone really do that?

Sure. In federal and even some state elections, there's a lot at stake. Corporations stand to gain or lose billions of dollars depending on the outcome of some of these elections. Candidates who are willing to reduce corporate taxes, reduce regulations on corporations, or pass favorable legislation for them can significantly affect corporate revenues. Then there are the "true believers" who are so passionate about an issue that hacking an election feels like a moral duty to them. They may be avid gun enthusiasts who fear firearm restrictions, or pro-life devotees who believe that they are saving babies.

What about the Russians? Could they hack our elections?

Well, there's some evidence that state voter registration systems might have been affected by a computer hack originating outside the country. Conclusive evidence has yet to be shared by our federal agencies. But yes, election fraud could originate outside our country.

Is there any evidence that our elections have been hacked?

Yes. Exit polls have been used throughout history to act as a check on the integrity of elections. When the reported vote tallies match or come close to the exit polls, the election results are thought to be fairly reported. But when the reported vote tallies vary from the exit polls by more than 1 or 2%, it's time to investigate.

But I thought our exit polls pretty much matched the reported vote totals.

The National Election Pool (a consortium of various media outlets) contracts to have exit polling done. They don't do it to ensure the integrity of our elections; they do it so that they can tentatively predict an outcome and have something to say in their newspapers or broadcasts. So when the reported vote tallies vary from their exit polls, they "adjust" the exit polls after the fact so that the numbers match.

So the “adjusted exit poll” numbers are kind of fake, right?

Right. That’s why election fraud experts capture the unadjusted exit poll whenever they can. A comparison of the unadjusted exit polls against the reported vote tallies will generally tell us if something is wrong.

And is something wrong?

Yep. We’re seeing variations that should raise alarms about our voting integrity. We’ve been seeing more and more of these variations ever since we went to a computerized counting of our ballots.

So how would you describe our voting system here in the U.S.?

It’s a hacker’s paradise. It’s shockingly easy to hack an election in America. In a real democracy, citizens cast their ballots in secrecy, and then the ballots are counted in public. But here in America, everything is secret. We’re supposed to “trust” the machine programmers to count our ballots as cast without having any means to ensure that they’re doing so.

But I got a receipt from my touchscreen machine that had the name of the person I voted for. So I can be sure that my vote was counted as cast, can’t I?

Unfortunately, no. The machine can be programmed to print a receipt for you that reflects the

candidate you voted for. But the machine can be programmed to actually record or count your vote differently than what's printed on your receipt.

My friend voted on an optical scan machine. She just darkened the circle by her candidate's name and then scanned her ballot into a machine. That's safe isn't it?

No, it's not. The optical scan machines can be infected with viruses or mis-programmed just like the touchscreen machines.

But my Secretary of State says that these machines have been tested and certified.

The Secretary of State tests a single machine of the type that will be used. So that particular machine can be certified to work correctly on that date and at that moment. But the Secretary of State does not test every machine that will be used to count ballots in the state. And even the very machine the Secretary of State tested can be infected later to miscount the votes.

But really, shouldn't we just trust the machines until we see conclusive evidence that they're wrong?

No. Not if you want to live in a democracy. Hackers can too easily hide their tracks. You could have reported vote tallies that diverge widely from the actual votes and you would never know. The hackers would be "electing" our President, not the people.

The current recount will catch any fraud, won't it?

It may catch some, but it will miss a lot. In precincts that have paper ballots we can do some checking. Poll workers will want to simply run the ballots through the same machine again, because it's easier and faster. But that will just be running the ballots through the same possibly infected machine. A hand count of the ballots is essential.

In precincts that don't have a paper ballot as a backup, the machines need to be examined forensically. But many states aren't allowing that. So that fraud will go undetected. Given that the virus can delete itself on election night, even a forensic examination might be futile.

So what can we do?

We have to return to hand-counted paper ballots. Everywhere.

But won't that be time-consuming and tedious? Computers make everything so easy!

If we want a democracy, we have to spend a bit of energy to make it happen. It's a small price to pay for ensuring that the person who earned the most votes wins the election. In Canada, the paper ballots are hand-counted within about four hours of the close of elections. Australia, Germany and the Netherlands also hand count paper ballots. If they can do it, I'm sure we can.

Okay, so is there any evidence of fraud in this 2016 election?

Yes. Plenty. Would you like me to explain?

Yes! Please do!

Okay. But let me point out something about this year's elections. The Senate races were particularly important this year because the outcome of those races could change the party having the majority – and the Senate is a powerful legislative body that has to confirm Supreme Court nominees. The new President will get to nominate Justice Scalia's replacement, and the new Senate will confirm – and a bare majority is all that's needed. The Supreme Court gets to decide hot button issues like gerrymandering, abortion rights, gun rights, gay marriage, the right to unionize. So for many, many people this election was very important. That is, there was an extraordinary incentive for fraud.

Okay, so what's the evidence?

Experts were able to look at the unadjusted exit polls for the Presidential and Senate races. Remember these are the exit poll numbers BEFORE the NEP fiddles with them to get them to artificially match the reported vote tallies. And what the experts saw were anomalies that don't happen when election results are counted accurately.

What kind of anomalies?

We saw alarming discrepancies between the unadjusted exit polls and the reported tallies in several critical Senate races. It appeared that the republican candidates' vote totals were much higher than the unadjusted exit polls would indicate.

Can you be more specific?

Sure. There were 20 senate races this year. In all but two there was a "red shift".

What is a "red shift"?

It is evidence of a shifting of the votes from democrat to republican. We have seen a very consistent "red shift" in our elections for about 15 years.

Is there such a thing as a "blue shift"?

Yes. That would be a shifting of votes from republican to democrat.

Does that occur?

A "blue shift" is rare, and when it has occurred, it didn't affect the overall outcome of the election. It simply makes the real winner look like s/he won by more votes.

Has a "red shift" changed the outcome of an election?

Yes. This is where there is significant concern. This has happened before, but let's stick to the 2016 elections. We'll use the reported numbers used in this

election before any states began a recount. There was a “red shift” in 18 out of 20 senate races; in three of them the shift actually changed the outcome of the election. Jonathan Simon has performed the calculations. See www.CodeRed2016.com. Take a look.

STATE	PERCENT OF VOTES SHIFTED TO RED IN 2016 U.S. SENATE RACES
MISSOURI	10.7%
WISCONSIN	7.3%
PENNSYLVANIA	4.6%

Couldn't the exit polls be wrong?

Yes, but the odds of the exit polls being wrong are much smaller than the odds of the reported vote tallies being wrong. That's why we need a way to verify the reported vote tallies. Right now, without paper ballots to count against the computer numbers, and without the cooperation of state official and precinct workers, there's no way to check.

What about the 2016 Presidential race?

Okay, let's look at that. We have unadjusted exit polls for 28 states. We see a “red shift” in 23 out of 28 of those states. In 5 of those states, the difference was enough to change the outcome of the Presidential election

in that state. That number is indicated in red. Again, Jonathan Simon has done this examination.

STATE	PERCENTAGE OF VOTES SHIFTED TO RED IN 2016 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL RACE
UTAH	11.9%
MISSOURI	10.7%
MAINE	8.3%
OHIO	8.0%
NEW JERSEY	7.8%
SOUTH CAROLINA	6.7%
NORTH CAROLINA	5.7%
IOWA	5.6%
PENNSYLVANIA	5.1%
WISCONSIN	4.7%
INDIANA	4.6%
GEORGIA	3.7%
NEVADA	3.5%
KENTUCKY	3.3%
FLORIDA	2.5%
VIRGINIA	2.3%

So are you saying that Hillary Clinton really won this election?

Probably. We can't know for sure until we look at the paper ballots and at the machine codes. But these numbers indicate a serious problem with our elections. And because we know how easy it is to

electronically alter the outcomes, and because we know that there are those highly incentivized to do so, we'd be very foolish not to investigate this election.

How long has this “red shift” been going on?

Experts have been noticing this for almost fifteen years. If these were random anomalies we would be seeing relatively even numbers of shifts to the red or to the blue over time. But we don't see that. The shift is consistently to the red. The odds of this consistent red shift happening by chance are statistically impossible. This long-term pattern is another very strong indicator that our elections are being hacked.

But isn't this pretty bold?

This evidence on its face should be enough to launch a nationwide investigation. It is showing a brazen theft of the Presidential and Senate elections in multiple states. The hackers are getting more aggressive and more arrogant. The system is blinking red, literally. They think they can steal our democracy, and right now they're getting away with it.

This is really upsetting. But it's just too hard to fix this.

No it's not. We can demand hand-counted paper ballots. There's strength in numbers. Once we have a critical mass of citizens who understand, we can make the changes we need to get our democracy back.

What can I do?

In other democracies, the citizens would be out in the streets demanding a new election and electoral reform. (Very much like the citizens of the Ukraine did in 2004. When the exit polls varied from the “official” vote tally, they took to the streets and demanded a new presidential election. And they got it.) It may come to that. But right now not enough people understand what is happening.

So for now, get educated. Then educate others. Then have them educate others. Keep it going. Don't drop the ball. Talk to your state senators and representatives. Be persistent and insistent. The goal is to change state laws to bring back hand-counted paper ballots. Know that some of those who resist this information are just ignorant of the facts and can be educated. Others who will resist want to be able to secretly control the outcome of elections. They need to be challenged and defeated. Decent people want all of the ballots to be counted as cast, no matter what party they belong to.

It's tempting to let this issue go when it's not an election season. But to protect the next election we need to act now. We need to get our democracy back, for ourselves and for our children.