

To a large extent, the history of American democracy is the story of how the right to vote was extended.

In the beginning of the republic, only white males with property could vote. The property qualification was gradually eliminated during the early decades of the 19th century. The struggle to do so was hard and was met by violent resistance in some places.

The fight to enfranchise women also consumed decades. Women fighting for the right to vote were sometimes jailed and sometimes beaten by the police. The struggle to enfranchise African-Americans took even longer. After slavery was abolished, southern, and some northern Black people were still prevented from voting in various ways. Some people gave their lives in this struggle. The final legal victory was not achieved until the 1960s. Even recently, various methods have successfully been used to prevent African-Americans (and poor white people for that matter) from voting. Look at Florida in 2000 and Ohio in 2004.

Millions of people who would formerly have been disfranchised can now vote. It is highly ironic that in many places this right has become meaningless because no one can be sure that his or her vote has been counted, and counted as the voter intended. I picture Victorian gentlemen who opposed women's suffrage and racists who opposed the vote for African-Americans laughing their heads off now(whatever they are). They have won after all.

I think we know what must be done. This touch-screen system based on shoddy technology and closed-source software must be thrown out. We must use a voting system in which every voter can have confidence that her vote is counted as intended. To do anything less would dishonor the sacrifices of all those who struggled for the right to vote.

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