

During a previous year at the polling station located at Foxdale Village, I observed that when the voting station opened at least one of the electronic voting (touch screen) machines did not function properly. The poll station workers called their central office and eventually a technician arrived who corrected the problems so that the voting machine could be used.

But my major concern is that touch screen machines do not have paper trail that can be checked later to insure the accuracy of the vote count. According to sworn testimony before legislative investigative committees and according to a Dan Rather video that we viewed at Foxdale Village, titled "The Trouble With Touch Screens" the electronic voting machines shown could be opened with one key and a virus inserted that would produce the predetermined voting totals, after which the virus would self-destruct and leave no trace. The video indicated evidence that vote totals had been manipulated in the Presidential elections in Florida in 2000 and in Ohio in 2004. The video included interviews with workers in plants in Florida that made punch cards. There was suspicion that the company could make a lot more money selling touch screens than punch cards, and there was suspicion that touch screen voting results are much easier to manipulate without getting caught because no paper trail is left when touch screen voting machines are used. (The touch screens are made in the Philippines and the electronic machines are made in China).

Certain local politicians have stated that they resented any implication that they might manipulate voting totals. I am willing to assume that our current local politicians are honest. However as a student of history (my career was as a social worker, but reading history is my hobby) I have learned that over the centuries those who rule or who want to obtain power will inevitably, sooner or later, use any tactic---honest or dishonest---that will allow them to take over or maintain their power (leadership of a nation or system of government).

I need only refer to rulers of old, such as kings, who used all possible forms of power and manipulation to gain and to maintain their power (leadership). As democratic systems were developed over centuries, all sorts of manipulations were developed to gain and hold power (or leadership) using democratic forms, by, for example, political machines such as Tammany Hall in NYC and the Democrat political machine in Cook County and in Chicago---manipulations such as gerrymandering, restrictions on those who can vote (poll taxes, long lines, etc.) and stuffing ballot boxes, buying voters, etc.. Communist nations produced election reports that allowed them to claim (however falsely) that they were more "democratic" than western nations such as Britain and the United States, regularly producing reports that around 90% of their eligible voters voted and that all of them voted for the candidates approved by their Communist Party. We know of many manipulations of vote totals around the world, the latest example being Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, who is trying to hold on to power there.

In that Dan Rather produced film, the film crew after great effort managed to obtain one of the electronic voting machines. A computer technician from Finland, who stated that he had never previously seen that voting machine, was placed in a room with that electronic voting machine, a room that was viewed through windows by observers and cameras. As he had predicted in advance that he could do, that computer technician in a few minutes (I don't really the exact number of minutes) inserted a virus into that electronic voting machine that produced a predetermined vote total record, and then the

virus he had inserted self destructed, leaving no trace.

That Finnish computer technician stated that his manipulation of the voting results record was fairly simple and that most skilled computer technicians could figure out how to do that fairly quickly.

As a student of history, I believe that the only thing that could discourage eventual prior manipulation of voting totals using electronic touch screens, would be if a system that leaves a paper trail will be used, so that the voting totals can later be checked, and problems and manipulations detected.

Many have risked everything to develop and to maintain our democratic voting system. It will be a shame on us if through lack of commitment to democracy and lack of vision we voluntarily give up a system that leaves a paper trail, which allows the checking of the voting results at a later time. As far as I know, leaving a paper trail is the only effective deterrence against possible undemocratic manipulation of voting result totals.

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