Written by Brad Friedman | The Brad Blog
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The voting systems in use for the nation's first three all-important electoral contests in the 2012 primary --- from Iowa to New Hampshire to Saturday's South Carolina Primary --- go from pretty great to intolerably horrible. And then comes Florida, which deserves its very own special category, thereafter.

The "First-in-the-Nation" caucuses in Iowa allowed voters to vote on hand-marked paper ballots, counted by hand in front of the public at the caucus site, with results announced to everyone right then and there before being called in to GOP headquarters and before ballots were move anywhere. The wonderfully transparent system allowed for Republican voters by the Iowa GOP (which they hypocritically fight against allowing for everybody else in other states, and even in their own during general elections) is just about as close as we general get in this country to Democracy's Gold Standard. It's also what allowed reporting errors to be discovered and confirmed by the public after an election with some 122,000 votes counted transparently within an hour or so of polls closing, leading to almost nobody charging "fraud" even though just 34 votes are said to separate first and second place in the certified results of the impossibly, and historically, close election.

As of the "First-in-the-Nation" primary in New Hampshire, however, election transparency for voters and their ability to oversee their own elections began to disappear. While a lucky 10% of voters enjoyed hand-marked, publicly hand-counted paper ballots, the rest of the state's voters were allowed to vote on hand-marked paper ballots, but forced to tolerate secret tabulation on oft-failed, e

asily-manipulated
Diebold optical-scan systems programmed by a
company (LHS) with a history of criminal behavior and convictions
. The results from those 90% of Granite State voters may have been tallied accurately by the Diebold op-scanners or, as seen in the disastrous 2008 Presidential Primary,
not
. Since NH doesn't bother to actually check to see if their machines tallied the hand-marked paper ballots correctly, we're unlikely to ever know if they did --- barring a recount request where, by then, the secure chain of custody of the paper ballots would be uncertain (
to put it mildly
.)

And now we come to the "First-in-the-South" Republican primary in South Carolina, where all evidence of how voters vote disappears entirely as the voters will be forced across the entire state to vote on easily-manipulated, oft-failed, 100% unverifiable touch-screen voting systems made by the nation's largest voting machine company, ES&S. When the machine-reported results are announced tomorrow night they will either be accurate or not. Either way, there will never be a way for anybody to know one way or the other as there will be nothing to prove how voters voted and nothing to "recount", even if anybody wanted to.

Appropriately enough, perhaps, Saturday's primary in the Palmetto State will offer 100% "faith-based" voting, since it will be scientifically impossible to prove that even a single vote for
any
candidate on the ballot has been recorded accurately by the ES&S iVotronic touch-screens as per
any
voter's intent. Known what we mean, Alvin Greene?...

The machines that will be in use on Saturday in South Carolina are the very same ones that reported an unknown, unemployed, seemingly-illiterate man named Alvin Greene --- who had done no campaigning, had no campaign staff, had no campaign money and no campaign website --- had unverifiably defeated Vic Rawl , a four-term state legislator and circuit court judge who had campaigned and raised money across the entire state, for the Democratic nomination for the U.S. Senate in 2010.

They are the same brand and model of machines (some of them, quite literally, the very same *p hysical*
machines!) that were used in

Florida's contested Congressional District 13 race for the U.S. Congress in 2006 when they inexplicably *lost* some 18,000 votes in a race ultimately awarded to the Republican candidate Vern Buchanan over Democrat Christine Jennings by just 369 votes. After that election (the one, ironically, held to fill the seat of Republican Rep. Katherine Harris who had previously been the Sunshine State's partisan Sec. of State during the 2000 Presidential debacle Florida momentarily wised up and largely banned touch-screen voting entirely across the entire state. Many of the state's wholly-unverifiable voting machines were then sent to the landfill, but many others were sold to the state of South Carolina.

The 100% unverifiable ES&S iVotronics that are used across the entire state of South Carolina are also the same type of machines that led to impossible numbers in Monroe County Arkansas' primary election in May 2010, when, as The BRAD BLOG reported exclusively , thousands of votes seem to have simply vanished after being reported by the Secretary of State on Election Night. To this day, neither state nor county officials are able to explain what happened.

They are also the same type of machines that were used in Clay County, Kentucky in 2006 when election officials actually changed the votes of voters on the machines after the voters had left "the booth". Eight top officials from the county's Election Commission --- including the County Clerk, a Circuit Court Judge and the School Superintendent --- are all now serving a collective 156 years in the federal penitentiary for those election fraud crimes.

As well, the ES&S iVotronic system is the same one that was discovered to have been "remotely accessed" on "multiple occasions" , including for 80 minutes the day before the 2010 general election, in Republican-leaning Venango County, PA, as recently revealed by a forensic audit carried out by two Carnegie Mellon computer scientists --- both of whom were threatened with lawsuits by ES&S for daring to examine their machines. The Republican-majority Board of Elections in the small, rural county had commissioned the study after problems in several recent elections, as the Chairman of the Election Board told us , resulted in inexplicable undervotes, reported touch-screen vote-flipping, and even zero votes registered for several candidates in some locations during recent elections.

They're the same machines that also registered ZERO voters for an Arkansas mayoral candidate in a 2006 run-off election, even though both he and his wife insist they had voted for him, at the very least.

And yes, they're the very same machines which resulted in a 2008 train-wreck in South Carolina itself, when they failed to even boot up across the entirety of Horry County at the beginning of the day during that year's Republican Primary election, forcing voters to scramble for pieces of paper --- even scraps of paper towels --- to try and cast a vote, since there were not enough emergency paper ballots on hand to overcome the disaster.

Other than that --- and this long and storied history of other disastrous ES&S failures --- the 100% unverifiable voting machines that will be used across the entire Palmetto State in Saturday's all-important "First-in-the-South" primary election are great!

Since these machines are used across the entire state, expect Election Day stories of machine failures and the usual reports of votes flipping before voters' eyes on the touch-screens. For those who may have chosen to vote absentee in SC, as the only way to be allowed a vote on a paper ballot, many, no doubt, are disappointed that their votes for Jon Huntsman or Rick Perry were all but "wasted" as those two have both dropped out of the race since voters began mailing in absentees. If only those voters had been allowed to vote on paper on Election Day, like those in the civilized world.

We recommend concerned citizens take photos of voting machine poll tape results printed out at the end of the day when polls close at each precinct. Sometimes that can come in handy if there are questions about reported results later. But other than that, whatever the state and media *tell* you are the results of the election --- no matter how "unexpected" those results may or may not be --- will most likely
be
the results of the election, whether they actually reflect the way voters attempted to vote or not.

It's a helluva way to run the "World's Greatest Democracy", ain't it?

But, don't worry, Florida's primary is just 10 days later, and Early Voting there starts Saturday as well. So what could *possibly* go wrong?

Link to original article from The Brad Blog