WHY WE MUST NOW ADOPT THE “OHIO PLAN” TO PREVENT THE “STRIP & FLIP” OF AMERICAN ELECTIONS

By [Mimi Kennedy] Bob Fitrakis & Harvey Wasserman

As the 2016 election approaches, we must remember that our electronic voting system as it currently stands is thoroughly rigged. The entire outcome can be flipped with a few late night keystrokes, as was done in Ohio 2004.

This year least 80% of the nation’s votes will be cast on electronic machines whose outcome can be altered by a governor and secretary of state with just a few keystrokes, and without detection.

There is a way—-we call it the “Ohio Plan”—-by which we can attain a fair and reliable vote count.

The **Ohio Plan** is this:

1. Voter registration must be universal and automatic for all citizens as they turn 18;
2. Electronic poll books are banned, with all voter registration records maintained manually;
3. All elections happen over a 4-day weekend—-Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday—-which together comprise a national holiday, preferably around Veterans Day in November.
4. All voting happens on paper ballots, using recycled or hemp paper;
5. All vote counting is done manually, with ballots preserved at least two years;
6. Polls are run and ballots counted by the nation’s high school and college students, who will get the days off and be paid a “scholarship” for their work at $15/hour.

**Part One** of the Ohio Plan is to guarantee all citizens are registered to vote when they turn 18. Postage-free mail-in forms are available at schools, post offices, drivers license bureaus, etc.

Today millions of Americans, mostly of color, are being wrongfully denied their right to register, with decisive partisan impacts dating at least to Florida 2000.

**Part Two** of the Ohio Plan requires that these registration records be maintained on paper log books that will be present at the voting precincts on election day.

The great investigative reporter Greg Palast has reported that a proprietary computer program being used by the GOP is center stage in the purging of countless voters in more than a dozen states as you read this. Those being stripped of their right to vote are mostly African-American and Hispanic, as well as students and the elderly.

Stripping at least 90,000 such voters in Florida 2000 was key to putting George W. Bush in the White House for the first time. His official margin was less than 600 votes. More than 300,000 voters were stripped from electronic log books in urban, largely Democratic areas of Ohio prior to the 2004 election, which was officially given to George W. Bush by less than 119,000 votes.

Under the Ohio Plan, all voter registration rolls must be maintained on paper files with double-blind multi-partisan supervision (to include Greens and other minority parties as well as the Democrats and Republicans) to guarantee they are not illegally purged in the lead-up to election day.

**Part Three** of the Ohio Plan requires our elections include extensive voting hours over a full four-day weekend, including Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. Vote counting should begin as the polls close on Tuesday.

The Constitution requires voting happen the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, i.e. sometime between November 2 and November 8. But Tuesday is a work day and millions of working Americans are deprived of their vote due to employment requirements. By extending access to the polls over a four-day holiday weekend we guarantee access to the millions who work as well as those who don’t.

**Part Four** of the Ohio Plan is to require all voting be done on paper ballots.

Electronic machines as currently constituted are virtually all corporate-owned. Courts have ruled the software is proprietary, meaning even the election boards that buy or lease the machines cannot verify the outcome. Internet voting is also impossible to verify. Thus our elections can be easily flipped with a few key strokes by shadowy operatives, and without open public verification, as happened in Florida 2000, Ohio 2004 and elsewhere.

Germany, Ireland, Romania, Japan and Canada all conduct their elections on hand-counted paper ballots. Ours should be printed on recycled or on paper made with hemp grown in the United States..

**Part Five** of the Ohio Plan requires the ballots be hand-counted, and preserved under federal protection for at least two years. Recounts are automatic, no matter what the apparent margin of victory, at public expense.

**Part Six** of the Ohio Plan provides for the nation’s polls to be run by our high school and college students, and for them to do the vote counting. They will be given time off from school to participate in this great civics lesson, and be paid at the level of any American city or state’s highest minimum wage, at this point $15/hour.

The provision for universal automatic voter registration has been endorsed by Democratic candidates Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton. Sanders has endorsed the requirement of universal hand-counted paper ballots, as has more than 90% of the American public.

It should be understood that the on-going electronic stripping of our poll books, as reported by Greg Palast, has already eliminated hundreds of thousands of American voters, most of them of color.

The way things stand in 2016 with electronic vote counting, there is no paper trail, no transparency and no public verification. The Information Technology companies with the state contracts to tally most US elections have full control over the outcome, with no public scrutiny or recourse.

Thus the election of 2016 is likely to be decided by a tiny handful of governors, secretaries of state and computer operators in the deep hours of election night, with no verification or recourse available to the public, and no necessary connection to how the public actually voted.

We support strict regulation of campaign financing. But without the mechanics of reliably registering our citizens to vote and guaranteeing an open, public, verified vote count, all else is moot.

We hope at least that much can be dealt with by election day 2016, lest it more accurately be know, once again, as Corporate Selection Day.

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