

# The People's Vote Must Count

## Reclaim Elections, Restore Voting Rights, Protect Our Ballots

Across the country, Americans are realizing we can no longer just rise up every two or four years to protest what is clearly coordinated attacks on democracy: privatized and rigged elections; denial of constitutional voting rights by the Supreme Court and state legislatures; illegal gerrymandering; and the rampant voter purging and “caging” that disenfranchise African-Americans, minority voters and the poor.

As Dr. Reverend Rodney Sadler emphasizes (page 9), the summer of 2016 has been an awakening. We've seen successful legal challenges to restore voting rights, the House of Representatives has formed a Voting Rights Caucus, and a new historic bill, the Help America Vote Act, has been introduced in Congress to protect our elections from insider rigging of our voting technology, and restore transparency and public oversight to our elections.

However, to ultimately reclaim and reform our broken elections system, we must build a sustained, grassroots election defense movement, one that addresses money in politics, voter suppression, and the crisis of corruption in our voting technology. This last issue has been historically ignored, until now.

Our 2016 election season has engendered rampant suspicions, and evidence of rigged primaries and caucuses. Given our current “black box” voting technology, the accuracy of the votecount from the local to the national level must not be assumed, even if there is no apparent evidence of fraud.

American election officials were infatuated with the computer promise of fast, easy, and accurate voting, even before the Help America Vote Act of 2002 forced states to adopt insecure, easily rigged computer vote counting, with \$3 billion in federal money. The insanity of “faith-based voting,” in which nobody can directly verify the results, gained wide acceptance.

By nature, electronic vote counting lacks transparency: the counting process is hidden in the software. Extreme security vulnerabilities in our current machines have been widely documented. Together with long lines created by tabulator breakdowns, these factors have fueled public distrust of elections and voter discouragement.

We can no longer allow even the potential of our democracy being subverted by the powerful using machines to invalidate the vote of We, the People. Many other democracies rely on hand counting votes on paper ballots, and some have virtually banned electronic counting. We should learn from their experience. In England's recent referendum

vote to exit the EU, the hand-counted results were available by noon the next day. Ireland's national referendum on marriage equality was fully hand counted by the next morning. With public observers, well-trained counters who are fresh to the job, and accuracy controls, these elections rarely produce disputed results. Moreover, there are considerable local economic benefits, including employment of thousands of specially trained citizens in each election, as opposed to repeatedly spending three to five billion dollars on new voting machines, most foreign-made, with the same flaws and only a ten-year lifetime.

The center section of this issue of *JR* outlines the Alliance for Democracy's new “People's Vote Must Count” Campaign. It is based on all of the knowledge and experience of the many people who helped put this issue of *Justice Rising* together. Check it out and launch your own local campaign

Ultimately, the whole framework of our electoral process has to be reconfigured. Reclaiming our electoral system must include the Constitutional Amendment promoted by the Move to Amend Campaign that would overturn *Citizens United* and end court-granted corporate rights. Campaign financing has to come from public funds. Super delegates and the internal bias of political parties must not control the nomination process. A form of ranked choice voting should be instituted to stop the spoiler effect. Debates must include a broad spectrum of political parties and views. The dominance of the two-party, winner-take-all system has to be challenged, as does the unfair rural power grab that gives a voter in Wyoming anywhere from 58 times to 258 times the power of a voter in California, which is enshrined in our Electoral College.

Election Day should be a holiday. Corporations and corporate ethics should be banned from the electoral process. The man behind the electoral curtain should be exposed, and deposed.

None of this will happen unless we all jump on the bus and get started on a democratic revolution!

Welcome aboard!

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graphic: collage thanks to Terrence Nowicki, Jr.