

# Suppressing the 99%

by Marta Steele

**Voter ID requirements that discriminate against lower classes, minorities, elderly people and college students as well as populations with handicaps was the first strategy to be employed.**

Very rich people in this country fight against government of, by, and for the people in many ways. Those in the top one percent income bracket in this country feel threatened by the persistent battle by the 99% to hold on to democracy and the people's vote, which has sometimes cost these privileged few a pittance, though these days they succeed in paying even less. Warren Buffett admits to paying the same percentage of income tax as does his secretary and Donald Trump won't even disclose his tax returns. All in all, this extreme, highly privileged minority have resorted to many strategies in their war against the 99%.

Voter ID requirements that discriminate against lower classes, minorities, elderly people and college students as well as populations with handicaps are a key strategy. Strict voter ID, requiring a picture and, when even more stringent, an expiration date, which could be a driver's license, disenfranchises poor people, college students, and seniors. A passport will also do — but who among these categories usually has one — or a birth certificate, which could cause problems for people born at home and too poor to acquire costly equivalents. Those who move often — read: poor people, students, and military — are inconvenienced if not disenfranchised, but a gun

owner's license will sometimes suffice. College IDs with pictures are most of the time not accepted.

In addition to voter ID, two other devices, caging and purging, disqualify voters. Caging involves mailing out form letters to targeted registered voters known to be away from home for various reasons, including foreclosure or overseas military service. Marked "Do not forward, address correction requested," the names on the returned, unopened letters are purged from the voter rolls as no longer active. Purging also targets innocent people with names matching others who have been convicted of felonies or have common American,

Hispanic, or Asian names, which often characterize underprivileged or minority voters or both; many such names, therefore, are also stripped from the voter rolls.

To further inconvenience the 99%, voter access to the polls is reduced. This can be as simple as manipulating voting schedules to inconvenience those with long working hours; situating voting locations inconveniently, away from public transportation; or changing precinct locations at the last minute without posting the information.

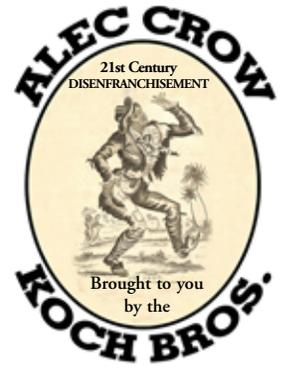
Shortening the time allotted for early voting is another way to force larger crowds of people in inner cities — where poor people usually live — to vote on Election Day. People who live away from the inner city — in affluent suburbs but not farther away, in remote rural areas — have a much easier time of it.

These are just some of the ways huge numbers of the 99% are kept from voting. Statistics verify that the fewer people who vote, the more likely candidates favoring the one percent will win, challenging the very notion of rule by the people.

In electoral races where pre-election polls show candidates in a virtual tie, such disenfranchisement is most effective. Races with larger margins, like Barack Obama's in 2008 and 2012, are less likely to be tampered with.

Rich people work very hard to keep Hispanics and blacks from voting, because they comprise such a large percentage of the population. Remember: the majority of our population will be Hispanic by 2050; even now more Hispanic babies than whites are born each day. Along with African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and yes, a burgeoning senior population (today's millennials will be aging by then), an even larger majority will challenge the upper class agenda. *Citizens United* has become a powerful weapon for them and it will be painfully fascinating to witness their next maneuvers.

*Marta Steele is an editor and blogger and author of the book Grassroots Geeks, Pros and Pols: The Election Integrity Movement's Rise and Nonstop Battle to Win Back the People's Votes, 2000-2008 (Columbus: CICJ Books, 2012).*



Big Oil, Big Pharma, the Scaife Family Allegheny Foundation, the Coors family Castle Rock Foundation, and more.

graphic: DonKey Hotey

## The ALEC Connection

The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) is a prime connection between the 1% and public policy making (see page 7). That has been the case since 1973, the year Paul Weyrich founded both the Heritage Foundation and ALEC. Much of his funding came from Joseph Coors, who was inspired to finance the right-wing resurgence after reading Lewis Powell's memo to the Chamber of Commerce that same year calling for a right wing war against the liberal successes of the 1960s.

Powell, a successful corporate lawyer and President of the American Bar Association, emphasized in his memo that, "the time has come — indeed, it is long overdue — for the wisdom, ingenuity and resources of American business to be marshaled against those who would destroy it." He then went on to urge the Chamber to create a broad-based campaign to counteract the popular social movements by subverting and regaining control of academics, scholarly journals, the media, the courts and politicians. Although the Chamber did not officially take charge of this initiative, in many ways ALEC did. Most of the state legislative initiatives aimed at suppressing poor and non-white Americans came out of ALEC, which then spread them across the country.