

# Failed Election Administration

by Marta Steele

“By the way — we have to fix that,” Barack Obama declared in his 2013 acceptance speech, referring to the long lines and hours of wait time as people attempted to vote. These words gave birth to a comprehensive report from the Presidential Commission on Election Administration (PCEA), led by lawyers for the Romney and Obama campaigns, and a host of commissioners from corporate America.

The Commission’s report addresses:

- Modernizing voter registration;
- Providing early voting to all Americans; and
- Revising systems so that no voter will have to wait in line longer than 30 minutes on election days.

However, the report does not mention or imply the most far-reaching atrocity: frequent hacking into electronic voting machinery to manipulate the vote away from the people’s choice—stripping We the People of our franchise and flipping votes into other candidates’ columns.

The PCEA recommends modernizing paper voter rolls via digitization — and the online voter registration it enables — that increases efficiency, but works against indigent populations. It is fallow ground for the kind of corruption that occurred in E-2000 in Florida, when tens of thousands of registered voters were illegally eliminated from county-based lists. Award-winning investigative journalist Greg Palast discovered this outrage, based on inaccurate and inadequate matching of common surnames with those of felons throughout the country and attempted to publicize it before the infamous December 12 Supreme Court’s (SCOTUS) decision “selected” G. W. Bush as President. Frequently these names were recognizably black or ethnic. Race was clearly indicated on the lists.

In the 2016 Arizona primary, in Maricopa County, which includes Phoenix, long lines and hours-long waits were attributed in part to the state’s closed primary system, which was limited to Republican, Democratic, and Green Party voters. Independents and those with other party affiliations who were unaware of this limitation were given provisional ballots.

Meanwhile, a decision that eliminated 140 precincts — from 200 down to 60, changing from the precinct system that served 2500 voters at each location to “voting centers” serving 20,833 each — caused further confusion and longer lines; some voters simply gave up, sacrificing their franchise. The last vote in Maricopa County was cast at midnight.

Election rights activist John Roberts Brakey, head of AuditAZ, points out that 150,000 voters were disenfranchised in this process where, as expected, the longest lines were in ethnic neighborhoods and on

college campuses. Of course, Arizona’s stringent voter ID requirements passed in 2013 abetted disenfranchisement, already facilitated by the SCOTUS’ gutting of section 5 of the Voting Rights Act (1965) (VRA).

Putting systems in place to “fix that,” as Obama recommended, opens up multiple challenges, including:

- Appointing or electing election administrations, poll-worker staffs, and redistricting boards, who are nonpartisan, to eliminate politicized decision-making. Today’s ratio of ethical poll workers to blatantly corrupt actors is around 50-50.
- Better equipping polling locations and “assuring that [they] are accessible to all voters and located close to where [the people] live.”

On the White House webpage, voting is not a top priority, but is hidden beneath the sixth link in the list of priority issues, Civil Rights.

Election law expert Professor Rick Hasen appreciates the commission’s recommendations, but writes that much more is needed. Law and Political Science Professor David Schultz asks why the president has not done more to implement the commission’s recommendations.

In September 2015, Obama recommended revising the VRA. Might an executive order from Obama “fix that”? Grassroots activists are laboring to implore their political representatives to intervene in countless violations of election integrity and voting rights, and pressing forward with litigation. Senator Bernie Sanders has expressed his disgust with this blatant election corruption that targets minorities, youth, seniors, and others: We the People.

“Discrimination” and “corruption” never appear in the Commission’s report.

*This article is dedicated with deep esteem to Danny Schechter (1942-2015), the “news dissector,” prolific author, media critic, filmmaker, television producer, radio commentator, blogger, and more.*

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**The Presidential Commission on Election Administration exemplifies corporate influence over public policy.**

## Corporate Election Advisors

Obama’s Commission on Election Administration exemplifies corporate influence over public policy. Half of its members come from multi-national corporations. One of its co-chairs, Benjamin L. Ginsburg is a partner at Squire Patton Boggs, one of the biggest corporate lobbying firms in Washington DC. He also oversaw the Bush campaign’s successful effort to steal the election in Florida in 2000. He is joined on the Commission by:

- Brian Britton, Vice President Global Park Operations & Initiatives at Walt Disney World Company;
- Joe Echevarria, CEO of Deloitte LLP, one of the nation’s largest corporate accounting firms and deeply involved in some of the accounting disasters that led to the 2008 financial crisis;
- Trey Grayson, head of the Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, who worked for a law firm that boasts that for “100 years, the biggest names in business have come to trust the bright minds at Bingham Greenebaum Doll LLP.”
- Michele Coleman Mayes, past Vice President and General Counsel for Allstate Insurance Company and Pitney Bowes;
- Tammy Patrick, Federal Compliance Officer for the questionable Maricopa County Elections Department in Arizona.

No one like Jonathan Simon or Victoria Collier, who have spent their lives analyzing electoral problems, was included in the Commission.