

About that Voting Machine Company Tied to Mitt Romney and Bain Capital...

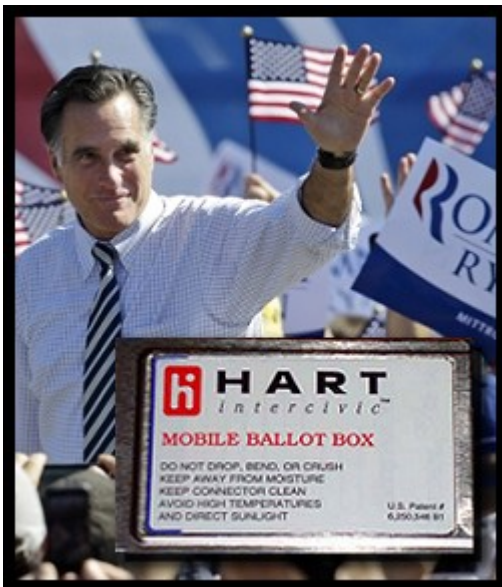
By [Brad Blog](#)

Region: [USA](#)

Global Research, October 24, 2012

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By **Brad Friedman**



Late last month, [Gerry Bello and Bob Fittrakis at FreePress.org](#) broke the story of the Mitt Romney/Bain Capital investment team involved in H.I.G. Capital which, in July of 2011, completed a [“strategic investment”](#) to take over a fair share of the Austin-based e-voting machine company [Hart Intercivic](#).

“Several tanker trucks full of political ink have been spilled on Mitt Romney’s tenure as a vulture capitalist at Bain Capital,” Bello and Fittrakis wrote. “A more important story, however, is the fact that Bain alumni, now raising big money as Romney bundlers are also in the electronic voting machine business. This appears to be a repeat of the infamous former CEO of Diebold Wally O’Dell, who raised money for Bush while his company supplied voting machines and election management software in the 2004 election.”

[Lee Fang at The Nation recently confirmed](#) the FreePress reporting in a story of his own on the “crony capitalism” of Tagg Romney, whose father’s money and high-profile connections present a number of troubling corporate conflicts of interest should Mitt Romney become President. [The Daily Dolt also followed up](#) with a very well-documented article on the H.I.G. group, their connections to Bain, and their takeover of Hart Intercivic.

[Hart’s announcement](#) of the deal describes H.I.G.’s role as as “co-investors”, though the financial services firm which brokered the deal [described it in their own announcement](#) as a full-fledged acquisition: “Hart Intercivic was acquired by HIG Capital late last week. The deal caps off a 2+ year relationship with Hart! Congrats to both Hart and the HIG team....its going to be a great partnership!”

Also this week, in a video that has gone a bit viral, [The David Pakman Show expressed understandable concerns](#) about Romney's close business partners having this type of corporate control over a large e-voting company whose, [extremely vulnerable and insecure \[PDF\]](#) — and often 100% unverifiable — voting and tabulation systems are now used, [according to VerifiedVoting.org's database](#), in all or parts of California, Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia and Washington. [*Pakman's video is embedded below.*]

When the story initially broke, I spoke about it on the radio with Fittrakis, but didn't comment on it at [The BRAD BLOG](#) for a number of reasons. One being the time we've been spending, during the same period, consumed by the continuing breaking story of the RNC/Romney consultant [Nathan Sproul and his companies at the center of the national GOP Voter Registration Fraud Scandal](#) which we've been covering in detail since it [first broke several weeks ago](#). Secondly, and not to downplay this story, because it's a very good and important one, the fact is that, though the names of the corporate titans and companies are different, it is essentially the same story that we have been telling here, over and over again — *and warning about with hair afire* — at [The BRAD BLOG](#) for nearly a decade.

Moreover, I've been on the road all this week for a conference, with much less time online than usual. But since so many folks have picked up on the Romney/Bain/H.I.G./Hart Intercivic stories and have sent email and Twitter queries to me about it, allow me to very quickly share a few thoughts, on this, some of which I sent to a reporter who also raised this issue with me late this week...

First, my statement that I sent to the reporter about this story...

Once again, we're reminded of the dangers of the privatization of our once-public electoral system. The company's ties to Romney aren't the only disturbing ones we've seen with similar companies over the years. The fact is, that nobody other than the public should have any sort of control of our elections. The proprietary voting systems now in use in all 50 states, whether owned by Romney associates, a George W. Bush associate (as with Diebold in 2004) or even a company tied to Venezuela's Hugo Chavez (as with Sequoia Voting Systems which blatantly [lied about that tie to public officials](#), and the Canadian firm Dominion which purchased Sequoia and also immediately [lied about the fact that Intellectual Property of their voting systems used all across the U.S. is still owned by the Venezuelan firm](#)), continue to be a grave threat to American democracy and confidence in U.S. Elections.

One other point I should add, for now, particularly since I suspect folks from the Right are also likely to ask about it. There has been a [false Rightwing story](#) that's been bubbling around this cycle, charging, inaccurately, that perennial Republican target George Soros owns or controls a company which will count 25% of U.S. votes in this year's election. While the story, spread first by public airwaves clown and radio host Michael Savage and, naturally, Fox "News," is completely false, the general *concern* at the heart of it is not. Indeed, it underscores, yet again, the very point we've been making on this topic here for years.

The company in question in the false Soros story is a Spanish-based firm named ScytI. While they do run vote-tabulation machines elsewhere, and are attempting to get into the ([insane](#)) Internet Voting game here in the U.S., their main involvement with U.S. elections at this time is via [their recent acquisition of a company named SOE](#). That company runs websites

which *report* election results for various public jurisdictions (municipalities, counties, states) on the Internet, but does not actually *count* any votes.

Yes, there are similar concerns about private corporations being in the business of reporting results in that way, as we saw back in 2004 when a rightwing company named SMARTech took over the reporting of questionable Presidential Election results in Ohio in the middle of the night as the country was waiting on the Buckeye State to determine who would be the next President of the United States. The media used the numbers reported on SMARTech's servers as the actual results of the election, while the actual *ballots* in most of the Buckeye State were *never* allowed to be reviewed by the citizenry. So whatever the private Republican company reported, accurately or inaccurately, to be the results that night were generally regarded as the official results of the election.

That is virtually the same threat presented by the private, unoverseeable third-party corporations which now control the election machinery — voting and tabulation systems — itself in all 50 states in the union. *Concerns* about this matter are justifiable *no matter which party you may or may not support*.

Despite the Rightwing reports, [Soros has no apparent control of the Scytl outfit](#), but it doesn't matter. Other private corporate entities — unaccountable to the public — do. Either way, whether it's Soros or entities tied to Mitt Romney, George W. Bush, Hugo Chavez or anybody else, the fact that we have allowed this complete corporatization of the machinery of our public elections, the very lifeblood of our democracy — the first and most important element of true *self-governance* — is, in and of itself, a continuing shame for what was once regarded as “the world's greatest democracy.”

Someone ought to do something about it. It's an outrage and a threat to our nation. But we've said as much *many* times before, even as very few in a position to actually do something about it, have bothered to pay much attention.

- *For another take on the dangers of corporate control of American elections, see [Ellen Theissen of VotersUnite.org's 2008 report](#) on the vendor controlled “undermining of U.S. Elections”.*

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