

Will the 2012 Presidential Election Be Stolen?

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Region: [USA](#)

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Why would I even ask that question? I've been trying (with virtually no success) to get everyone to drop the election obsession and focus on activism designed around policy changes, not personality changes. I want those policy changes to include stripping presidents of imperial powers. I don't see as much difference between the two available choices as most people; I see each as a different shade of disaster. I don't get distressed by the thought of people "spoiling" an election by voting for a legitimately good candidate like Jill Stein. Besides, won't Romney lose by a landslide if he doesn't tape his mouth shut during the coming weeks? And yet . . .

It matters to me whether our elections are stolen in any number of ways in which they can be stolen, some of which would simply mean Romney robbing Obama, but others of which are related to the barriers facing non-corporate candidates. Most of these dangers face congressional candidates as well; election theft is not exclusively a presidential problem. Bob Fittrakis & Harvey Wasserman have just published "[Will the GOP Steal America's 2012 Election? Corporate Vote Theft & the Future of American Democracy](#)," with an introduction by Greg Palast. I recommend it especially for the history of election fraud back through the centuries, but also for the collection of Fittrakis-Wasserman articles that make up the vast bulk of the book. The book opens, however, with a systematic survey of the ways in which your vote can be disappeared. Here's a taste:

"The Republican Party could steal the 2012 US Presidential election with relative ease. The purpose of this book is to show how, and to dissect the larger — potentially fatal — warning signs for American democracy, no matter which corporate party is doing the stealing. Six basic factors make this year's theft a possibility:

"1. The power of corporate money, now vastly enhanced by the U.S. Supreme Court's Citizens' United decisions;

"2. The Electoral College, which narrows the number of votes needed to be moved to swing a presidential election;

"3. The systematic disenfranchisement of — according to the Brennan Center — ten million or more citizens (a million in Ohio alone), most of whom would otherwise be likely to vote Democratic;

"4. The accelerating use of electronic voting machines, which make election theft a relatively simple task for those who control them, including their owners and operators, who are predominantly Republican;

"5. The GOP control of nine of the governorships in the dozen swing states that will decide the outcome of the 2012 campaign; and,

“6.The likelihood that the core of the activist ‘election protection’ community that turned out in droves to monitor the vote for Barack Obama in 2008 has not been energized by his presidency and is thus unlikely to work for him again in 2012.”

Each of these points is explained and elaborated in the book. Why, you might ask, does it matter which party a governor belongs to? Well . . .

“Without his brother Jeb as governor of Florida 2000, and Kathleen Harris as secretary of state, George W. Bush could not have become president of the United States. As we have seen, Governor Bush purged Florida’s voter rolls of tens of thousands of likely Democrats. Various ballot ‘problems’ emerged, including the electronic ‘glitch’ in Volusia County. Then Secretary of State Harris stalled a statewide recount and opened the door for the Supreme Court’s Bush v Gore decision. Without Governor Robert Taft and Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell in Ohio 2004, Bush could not have gotten a second term. Taft facilitated another purge of voter rolls, removing some 300,000 names from the lists. Then Blackwell ran an astonishing range of dirty tricks aimed at Democratic voters, culminating in his now-infamous late-night manipulation of the electronic vote count that moved the victory from Kerry to Bush. The personal, private election day visit the President and Karl Rove paid to Blackwell in his Columbus office may have been their most important stop of the campaign.”

Fittrakis and Wasserman also don’t skimp on proposals for actual change of the sort you won’t hear discussed much, if at all, in the Romnobama Debates in October:

“1.Money must come out of politics. No nation can allow a tiny handful of million/billionaire corporatists to pour unlimited cash into our elections and expect to emerge with even a semblance of democracy. If elections can be bought, so can our government, to the detriment of us all. Citizens United must be reversed, corporations must be stripped of legal personhood, and money must be banned from the electoral process. This will take an unprecedented nation-wide grassroots campaign resulting in at least one Constitutional amendment. The odds may seem daunting. But George III was not Divine, and corporations are not people.

“2.Elections cannot be administered by partisans. All local, state and federal election officials must be banned from playing any role in any campaign relating to the election they are administering. A strict non-partisanship must apply to establishing congressional districts and all other aspects of our democratic process.

“3.All American citizens must be automatically registered to vote upon turning 18. The arduous, unfair practice of forcing pro-democracy organizations to go out and register voters is nonsensical. Voting is an inherent natural right and responsibility. Citizens should be removed from voter rolls only upon death or renunciation of citizenship.

“4.All places of voting must be convenient, stable, well-known and easily accessible.

“5.Voting should be available over a period of weeks by mail, and at polling stations through the Friday-Saturday-Sunday-Monday around Armistice Day, November 11. The polls should be largely worked by high school and college students who will get school credit for the day, and who will get a holiday that

Tuesday to count the ballots.

“6.All electronic voting and counting machines should be banned (as Ireland has just done, and as has long been the case in Canada, Japan, Germany and elsewhere) with all ballots cast on recycled paper, to be hand-counted.”

Not a bad list. Too bad you can't vote it into being. But we probably won't get it at all if we lose every last pretense of legitimate elections. Reforming our elections must be integral to our agenda, even once we've figured out that the Messiah hasn't been nominated. After all, that realization is tightly connected to the realization that our elections need major repairs. The Messiah will never be nominated, even after all of these reforms, but we might manage to nominate a junior assistant disciple — which is actually preferable, and which will be far superior to the current crop of moneychangers.

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