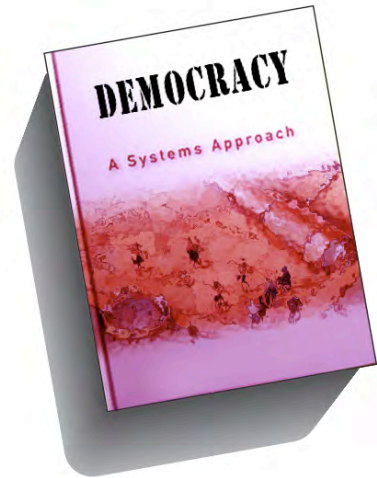


OWNER'S MANUAL

Retain Precinct Voting & Reject All Democracy Substitutes



Democracy cannot survive without Precinct Voting. Precinct Voting? Yes, it's hard to believe that the rag tag of grammar schools, garages, and libraries that blanket our nation, and that is held together by our dedicated and generous elderly, could be so important. But it is.

Because when all genuine democracies are reduced down to their essence, just two principles remain: *(1) the absolute privacy of its ballots to protect voters from persecution, and (2) a "bottoms-up" citizen-controlled structure of governance for counting those ballots.* Precinct Voting not only can uphold these two principles, but it is unique in its ability to verifiably guarantee that these principles are met. How can Precinct Voting guarantee it? By assuring that its operations are transparent to the largest possible number of eyewitnesses without reliance on interpretation by government or machines.

Notably, the opposite is true with any inverse election structure – structures that are ultimately Top-Down and Centralized; for example, both the Vote by Mail and Vote by Internet methods. Surprisingly, despite their inherently undemocratic structure, Top-Down and Centralized ("T-DAC") methods of holding elections are increasing in popularity at a perilous rate.

It is important for our citizenry to realize that Precinct Voting sets the standard that any other voting method must meet—if not exceed. In the meantime, all voting methods that cannot attain this minimum standard must be rejected, for as long as it is still possible to do so.

About Voluntarily Locking Ourselves Out of *Our* Democratic Process

Once gone, precincts are extinct, and we're not getting them back. Here's pivotal question: *Have the increasing number of citizens who are voluntarily opting to forfeit their precinct rights, in exchange for the convenience and efficiency of T-DAC methods, considered the finality of their decision?* Thomas Jefferson gave us a good warning about the cost of losing sight of our electoral process when he said, "*The price of freedom is eternal vigilance.*" Heeding this warning, an examination of the unintended consequences reveals this:

Once we close the doors to Precinct Voting, we are not only locked out of the most meaningful portions of our democratic process, but we also lose the means to regain access.

How Precinct Voting Sets the Standard

So specifically how can Precinct Voting "verifiably guarantee" that it upholds ballot secrecy and decentralized citizen-controlled counting — the two essential principles for a genuine democracy? Precincts are citizen-controlled territories, in the public domain, expressly set up for convenient neighborhood voting and tabulation. They provide the only voting structure that empowers citizens to observe the accuracy of their election process, first-hand, without reliance on trust. Thereby Precinct Voting surpasses all other election structures by sustaining a genuine democracy in the following 5 interdependent ways:

- 1. Optimal Citizen Control**
- 2. Absolute Voter Protection**
- 3. Maximum Transparency**
- 4. Best Security**
- 5. Citizen Verified (Double-Checked) Accuracy**

1. Optimal Citizen Control

A genuine democracy, a government “*by the people,*” best provides Optimal Citizen Control with Precinct Voting, because its decentralized structure places the power—not in the hands of the government or their private assignees—but physically and tangibly in the hands of the citizens with their capacity for comprehensive and meaningful election oversight, at each and every precinct.

The wisdom often attributed to Joseph Stalin is right: “*Those who cast the votes, they decide nothing. Those who count the votes, they decide everything.*”

In a genuine democracy, predicated on the “Consent of the Governed,” it is a conflict of interest for the government and its private assignees to control elections — the very process by which their own fate is determined.

Note: “Censored Precincts,” which are precincts blocked from affirming the accuracy of their election data before the ballots (or voter verified paper audit trails) leave their possession on election night, do not meet this Optimal Citizen Control requirement.

Unacceptable Substitutes: *Top-Down and Centralized (“T-DAC”) voting methods, such as Vote by Internet and Vote By Mail, do not meet this Optimal Citizen Control requirement:*

(1) Vote by Mail. *The legitimacy and privacy of operations are entrusted to election insiders to manage a labyrinth of custody, which is secured only by a bureaucracy laden with difficult-to-enforce regulations. Because citizen oversight is limited to gratuitous spot checks—at best. Even an opportunity for citizens to pull a precinct’s ballots out for examination offers them no certainty that the ballots they examine are the same ballots that were cast, in their entirety and without post-casting manipulation. Citizen Control is significantly compromised.*

(2) Vote by Internet. *Ultimately, this method relies on an elite of election insiders (government officials or their private vendors) who possess the keys to critical election operations (such as encryption software), and it is at their discretion whether the software is properly installed, without tampering, to ensure both the voters’ privacy and the accuracy of the ballot tabulation. Citizen Control is not just less than Optimal, it is non-existent.*

2. Absolute Voter Protection

A genuine democracy, a government “*by the people,*” best provides Absolute Voter Protection with Precinct Voting, because voters are not required to record their names or any other identification in the proximity of their ballot when it is cast. Therefore its structure affords voters with a method to verify the absolute privacy of their votes, without relying on trust in a process that voters cannot entirely observe or affirm is properly installed or employed.

Absolute Voter Protection is essential to ensuring that the true voice of the people is reflected in their votes. Voters must be free from coercion by family members. The courageous Suffragettes won the right to vote to free women from oppression by domineering family members and employers; but without privacy of the ballot, they would have not accomplished their goal.

But even more important, they must be free from the threat of persecution by the government. Public documents show that the CIA has been permitted to spy upon the U.S. citizen mail for nearly two decades, and recently President George W. Bush attached a signing statement to a postal privacy bill stating that the executive branch reserved the right to spy upon the U.S. mail in the interest of national security. But any trespass on the voters’ privacy of the ballot needlessly exposes voters to the potential for political persecution; yet, this exposure to persecution could be entirely avoided with Precinct Voting.

If our democracy is to survive beyond this experimental phase, it must be able to withstand the days of its worst behavior—not its best. With its longevity at stake, democracy cannot be structured in a way that a trust-based system for ballot privacy could expose voters to the possibility that our government could persecute its citizens for their political beliefs or intimidate citizens so that voters do not feel free to vote their conscience.

Unacceptable Substitutes: *T-DAC voting methods, such as Vote by Internet and Vote By Mail, do not meet this Absolute Voter Protection standard:*

- (1) Vote by Mail.** *Voters are required to identify themselves on the outside envelope that contains the ballot. Maintaining the secrecy of their ballot relies on trust in an elite of election insiders (government officials or their private vendors) to properly separate the voter signature from the ballot itself to ensure vote privacy. When voters are offered an opportunity to observe this process, voters have no means to affirm whether election insiders have violated the anonymity of the ballot during the unobservable portions of the election process.*
- (2) Vote by Internet.** *Voters are required to identify themselves by some electronic means when they vote. The secrecy of their ballot relies on an elite of election insiders (government officials or their private vendors) who possess the keys to critical electronic operations (such as encryption software), and it is at their discretion whether the software is properly installed, without tampering, to ensure the voters’ privacy. Voters have no means of affirming that insiders do not maintain the electronic link between them and their ballot.*

To remedy the lack of oversight at the precincts, many T-DAC systems are looking to high-tech features to compensate (such as high speed ballot duplication, ballot tracking codes), which are not only more costly, but also less transparent to citizens than what can easily be provided with traditional Precinct Voting. Worse, when some of these seemingly benign features are used in tandem, there is the potential for wrongfully tracking with specificity who voted and how they voted.

3. Maximum Transparency

A genuine democracy, a government “*by the people,*” best provides Maximum Transparency with Precinct Voting, because its structure allows the largest number of eyewitnesses of diverse affiliations, at each and every precinct, to observe the most meaningful portion of our electoral process, which is: from the moment when the voters deposit their ballots into a machine or box through to the tabulation and posting of the contents of the machine or ballot box.

Even if it were feasible to transport all ballots from the precinct to the central tabulation site by armored trucks with 24 hour video surveillance, the level of citizen observable operations could not match what is possible at the source, at the precinct, to affirm (1) the data set: that the ballots tabulated are indeed the ballots cast, as well as to affirm (2) the tally: that the ballots were tabulated accurately.

Unacceptable Substitutes: *T-DAC voting methods, do not meet this Maximum Transparency standard:*

(1) Vote by Mail Provides Only Gratuitous Citizen Observation. *Citizen observation rights that are disconnected and gratuitous spot checks—at best, and therefore deny citizens the ability to verify that the ballots tabulated are indeed the same ballots that were cast, without manipulation, and in their entirety. For example, when voters are offered an opportunity to observe this process, voters have no means to affirm (1) whether the envelopes or ballots that they observe are the same envelopes or ballots that were cast without manipulation; (2) whether the signatures in the voter registration database—that the envelope signatures are compared against for authentication—are legitimate; and (3) whether the envelopes or ballots are from the voters claimed. Notably, the 2001 National Commission on Federal Election Reform, a bipartisan group co-chaired by Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, concluded that absentee ballots do not satisfy its criteria for sound and honest elections.*

(2) Vote by Internet Provides NO Meaningful Citizen Observation. *There are no ballots for citizens to observe, and there is no way for citizens to observe any part of the electronic process of collecting and counting votes in cyberspace. Because while citizens may be able to view a digital snapshot of their ballot online to verify its accuracy, Vote by Internet provides: (1) no means for citizens to affirm that this digital snapshot completes its journey to the final tally without manipulation; and (2) no means for citizens to affirm that digital snapshots by non-existent voters are not added into the tabulation.*

4. Best Security

A genuine democracy, a government “*by the people,*” provides Best Security with Precinct Voting, because unlike “*security through obscurity*” methods that ultimately rely on an elite of election insiders who possess the keys to the integrity of the system, the decentralized structure of Precinct Voting is inherently composed of massive eyewitnesses able to observe the essential election operations, without change of custody. Precinct Voting is the most difficult to subvert.

Specifically, Precinct Voting is decentralized in a manner that requires a vast and diverse range of eyewitnesses who can observe and verify the entire Precinct Voting process—from the deposit of the ballots through to the possibility of cross-checking the precinct tallies to affirm their accuracy. Also, it is important that immediately after the precinct’s election data is tabulated that it is publicly posted outside the precinct, and ideally uploaded to several independent websites. The Precinct Voting structure has the potential to completely bypass the possibility of election “insider” tampering.

In the spirit of the philosophical principle of Occam’s Razor that essentially states, “*The simplest solution tends to be the right one,*” the “Suffragette’s Razor,” applies the same logic to election systems: “*The shortest distance in time and space between a ballot cast and its tabulation, the less opportunity for mischief or errors.*”

While it is true that precincts can be commandeered by citizens, its structure makes it both difficult and inefficient to do so, and practically impossible to do on a massive scale. Any trespasses at the precinct level are the least capable of subverting election data significantly enough to change an election’s outcome.

The difference between fraud at the precinct and fraud by election insiders is the difference between “retail” fraud and “wholesale” fraud. Fraud related to precincts requires one to commit more fraud to affect more votes because it is decentralized — “retail” fraud. But top down and centralized (T-DAC) structures are susceptible to wholesale fraud, where the amount of effort required to change many votes is minimal — “wholesale” fraud becomes easy.

It’s not that tabulation at precincts can’t be subverted, it’s just that wholesale fraud so much easier to accomplish in a centralized voting system. Therefore, the Precinct Voting structure, though not perfect, provides the Best Security simply because its integrity is verifiable and its security is vastly more secure than any other voting method.

Precinct Voting, with tallies posted at the precinct and published immediately, completely eliminates the possibility of covert tallies that assist with fraud. Covertly examining tallies prior to an election provides superb statistical data, similar to what exit pollsters rely on, and can be used to rig elections with precision. **Unacceptable Substitutes:** *T-DAC voting methods, such as Vote by Internet and Vote by Mail, do not meet this Best Security standard for many reasons, including the following:*

- (1) Unenforceable Regulations.** *T-DACs force citizens to trust a security process that relies on careful compliance with copious regulations that are not entirely observable by citizens, yet all security systems are only as strong as their weakest link.*
- (2) Elite Control.** *T-DAC methods rely on an elite of election insiders (government officials or their private vendors) who control the counting process and possess the keys to critical election operations, and the accuracy of the counting is at their discretion. Where software is used, it is also at their discretion whether the software is properly installed, without tampering, to ensure both the voters' privacy and the accuracy of the ballot tabulation.*

5. Citizen Verified (Double-Checked) Accuracy

A genuine democracy, a government “*by the people,*” best provides citizen verifiable accuracy with Precinct Voting, because citizens can double-check, first-hand, without reliance on trust, that the tallies at the precincts are accurate, and therefore the accumulated vote totals are accurate.

Exit polls stationed outside of precincts, which can make election day projections using reliable statistical models, are a traditional index of election accuracy used by the United States to evaluate the legitimacy of the foreign elections, as well as our own. Exit polls are only possible with Precinct Voting.

The precinct structure also affords citizens the possibility to verify the accuracy of each precinct's tallies by achieving *Consilience*, which is a specific and rigorous form of checks and balances.

Consilience requires at least two tabulation methods, with separate and distinct oversight, to come to the same conclusion within a margin of discrepancy that would not overturn the election. *Consilience* is only possible with Precinct Voting. (For details, see: http://www.califelectprotect.net/a_b/ConsilienceDefined.pdf)

Unacceptable Substitutes: *T-DAC voting methods, such as Vote by Internet and Vote By Mail, do not meet this standard of allowing Citizen Double-Checks of Accuracy:*

- (1) No Possibility for Exit Polling.** *Vote by Internet and Vote by Mail structures can only be double-checked by surveys that do not provide the same level of statistical accuracy. No in-person exit polls are possible, since there is no in-person voting at the precinct.*

(2) No Possibility for Citizen Double-Checks. *The accuracy of any double-check of election results are predicated on the 1:1 correspondence between the ballots tabulated and the ballots cast, and on the assumption that no tampering has occurred. Without those assurances, any double-check — or even any spot check — cannot be relied on.*

Vote by Internet provides no citizen-observable certainty that ballots cast into cyberspace are the same as ballots tabulated at the other end of the Internet connection. Vote by Internet provides no citizen-observable certainty that the secret software or the election insiders have not manipulated the tally.

In a Vote by Mail structure, the chain of custody of the ballots is too weak and uncertain to ensure the 1:1 correspondence between ballots tabulated and ballots cast. Even an opportunity to pull a precinct's ballots out for examination or to affirm receipt of a ballot offers citizens no means to reasonably affirm that the ballots tabulated are the same ballots that were cast, without manipulation, and in their entirety. The weak chain of custody and the long passage of time between the casting and the counting of the ballots provides a high potential for unobserved tampering by insiders or secret software installed by insiders.

Each generation has its Guardians of Democracy, and each generation has its unique challenges to uphold the integrity of our democracy. In our age of efficiency and convenience at all costs, it's particularly hard to send a message to our fellow citizens to get up and exercise their rights, by walking over to their precincts, by physically participating in our democracy to protect our body politic.

But if we, as Americans, still can appreciate the immeasurable value of the democracy we've been entrusted, for which so many have waited hours, for which so many have crossed oceans, for which so many have sacrificed lives, then we have no choice but to reject all substandard democracy substitutes—no matter how tempting.

Precinct Voting is the only voting method currently available that satisfies this criteria: (1) Optimal Citizen Control; (2) Absolute Voter Protection; (3) Maximum Transparency; (4) Best Security; and (5) Citizen Verified (Double Checked) Accuracy. **Therefore it is the only voting method that is verifiably derived from the people to give our government the legitimacy and moral right to use its powers. Precinct Voting is the only method that genuinely provides “Consent of the Governed.”**

For Californian's ready to reclaim ownership of their elections, sign this **"Be the Change Now"** Petition at <http://www.califelectprotect.net/ap/pnum713.php>

For details about problems with **Vote by Mail**, see: http://www.califelectprotect.net/a_b/Vote_by_Mail_Problems.doc

For details about problems with **Vote by Internet**, see: <http://servesecurityreport.org/>

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