

seven manu- survey, Diebold's AccuVote TSV, are being
to choose from used in 16 Pennsylvania counties.

you need to address it."

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200 Reasons to Worry

When the city started looking for new voting machines, election officials traveled the country to see their options in action and, in 2002, went with the Danaher/Guardian Voting Systems ELECTronic 1242 model.

During this spring's primary, however, many malfunctioned, though not to the degree they did in Ohio in 2004, when Danaher machines recorded 4,258 votes for President Bush and 260 for John Kerry — in a precinct with just 638 voters. County voter registration administrator Bob Lee puts the number of failed machines at more than 200, saying that the normal number in a comparable election should have been between 20 and 30.

"The machines were repeatedly tested until the problem was identified," says Lee. They eventually identified the glitch: The tape feeds used to print paper records were unravelling when the machine was powering up. "It won't happen again."

That doesn't bring much reassurance for watchdogs, however.

Bev Harris is the author of *Black Box Voting*, and the founder of the election watchdog group by the same name. She says the system is laced with corporate conflicts of interest and insecure voting technologies vulnerable to manipulation.

"When there is money and power at stake, whoever has custody of the voting mechanism controls the votes," says Harris. She points out that, as with other manufacturers, "There have been some concerns about the source code on which the machines operate. Danaher's software is a proprietary trade secret. You don't ever want to have secret, proprietary software running the machines on which citizens vote. Citizens have a right to know that

their vote was counted accurately," she says. "People out there will do an end-run to exploit the weaknesses. Because the Danaher is an older machine, it's not being pitched as much to voting jurisdictions, so there are fewer experts that have studied it thoroughly. As a result, very little is known about them."

Responds Lee: "They say that we are buying technology that is already obsolete. I like to think we are buying proven technology."

Greg Palast investigated the 2000 elections in Florida for the BBC. In his book *Armed Madhouse*, he contended that millions of minority votes were not counted in 2004. Asked to identify the greatest current danger, he points to the May primaries.

"Two hundred machines didn't function — didn't record votes — that you *know* about," he says. "Forget Karl Rove using the software to change your vote. It's simpler: The machines break down, don't open and I can tell you without a glance the color of the voters in the precinct where it happens. Nationwide, the GAO shows that computers fail to record votes in black districts twice as often as in white districts. Digital Jim Crow."

Machines, Palast says, are part of a larger picture.

"The liberal bloggeratti are all aflutter about the dangers of touch-screen voting. That's the least of the problems, a distraction, a fake-out," he says. "In the two years leading to the 2004 presidential race, Pennsylvania rejected 661,937 registration applications — one out of three, one of the highest rejection rates in the nation. So they've got you distracted with computers while they're bleaching the voter rolls white."

—Philip Tanfield

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