



Broken Ballots: Will Your Vote Count? (Center for the Study of Language and Information - Lecture N)

By Douglas W. Jones, Barbara Simons

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For many of us, the presidential election of 2000 was a wake-up call. The controversy following the vote count led to demands for election reform. But the new voting systems that were subsequently introduced to the market have serious security flaws, and many are confusing and difficult to use. Moreover, legislation has not kept up with the constantly evolving voting technology, leaving little to no legal recourse when votes are improperly counted. How did we come to acquire the complex technology we now depend on to count votes? Douglas Jones and Barbara Simons probe this question, along with public policy and regulatory issues raised by our voting technologies. *Broken Ballots* is a thorough and incisive analysis of the current voting climate that approaches American elections from technological, legal, and historical perspectives. The authors examine the ways in which Americans vote today, gauging how inaccurate, unreliable, and insecure our voting systems are. An important book for election administrators, political scientists, and students of government and technology policy, *Broken Ballots* is also a vital tool for any voting American.

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Editorial Review

Review

Broken Ballots is an extremely useful book on an extraordinarily important subject: will your vote count? As this book convincingly shows, the combination of defective technology and poor regulation have too often meant that votes are miscounted, or not counted at all.

The book provides a comprehensive history of the use of voting technology in the United States, but its heart is the “voting technology battles” that followed the 2000 election. That election, as the authors note, demonstrated more dramatically than any other the impact that flawed technology can have on election outcomes.

Simons and Jones were not mere spectators to these battles, they have been important players. They make no apologies for their opposition to paperless computerized voting machines, or to internet voting. While not everyone will agree with their characterization of all the battles of the last decade, they provide a cogent and clear critique of current election administration and regulation, and offer several common sense solutions for increasing the accuracy and fairness of our elections.

This book is a must read, not only for election officials and other policy makers, but also for public interest groups who seek to protect the vote and, indeed, for every citizen who wants his or her vote to be counted.--
Frederick A. O. “Fritz” Schwarz, Jr., Chief Counsel, Brennan Center for Justice

(Frederick A. O. "Fritz" Schwarz, Jr., Chief Counsel, Brennan Center for Justice)

From the Back Cover

Broken Ballots begins with a comprehensive history of the use of technology in elections, starting with mechanical voting machines in the 19th century. Many of the problems that emerged then continue to plague modern electronic voting machines. The authors go on to illustrate how both legislation and the regulatory structure governing voting equipment have been ineffective at addressing technological risks - risks that frequently outstrip the understanding of election administrators and regulators. The result has been a series of failures where there is reason to doubt that the official vote count correctly reflected the intent of the voters. Both Democrats and Republicans have been the victims of these failures. The book ends with a prescriptive summary that includes recommendations for policies and legislation to better protect the democratic process.

Douglas W. Jones has taught computer science at the University of Iowa since 1980. He has chaired the Iowa Board of Examiners for Voting Machines and Electronic Voting Systems. After the contested 2000 presidential election, he was called to testify before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the House Science Committee, and others. Since 2000, he has had little time to devote to anything but elections.

Barbara Simons is retired from IBM Research and a former President of ACM, the nation's oldest and largest educational and scientific society for computing professionals. Her involvement with computerized voting began with her appointment to the National Workshop on Internet Voting, convened at the request of President Clinton. She has since written, testified, and spoken extensively about voting-related issues.

About the Author

Douglas W. Jones is on the computer science faculty at the University of Iowa. **Barbara Simons**, a former president of the Association for Computing Machinery, is retired from IBM Research. For more information, please visit www.brokenballots.com.

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