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THE OFFICIAL BLACK BOX VOTING WEBSITE

2-23-06: Someone accessed 40 Palm Bea...

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<p><b>Author</b></p> <p></p> <p><b>Bev Harris</b>            Board Administrator            Username: Admin</p> <p>Post Number: 3748            Registered: 12-2004</p> <p>Best of Black Box?            ★★★★★</p> <p>Votes: 41 (<a href="#">A keeper?</a>)</p>	<p><b>Message</b></p> <p>Posted on Thursday, February 23, 2006 - 08:49 pm:    </p> <hr/> <p>The internal logs of at least 40 Sequoia touch-screen voting machines reveal that votes were time and date-stamped as cast two weeks before the election, sometimes in the middle of the night.</p> <p>Black Box Voting successfully sued former Palm Beach County (FL) Supervisor of Elections Theresa LePore to get the audit records for the 2004 presidential election.</p> <p>After investing over \$7,000 and waiting nine months for the records, Black Box Voting discovered that the voting machine logs contained approximately 100,000 errors. According to voting machine assignment logs, Palm Beach County used 4,313 machines in the Nov. 2004 election. During election day, 1,475 voting system</p>			

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calibrations were performed while the polls were open, providing documentation to substantiate reports from citizens indicating the wrong candidate was selected when they tried to vote.

Another disturbing find was several dozen voting machines with votes for the Nov. 2, 2004 election cast on dates like Oct. 16, 15, 19, 13, 25, 28 2004 and one tape dated in 2010. These machines did not contain any votes date-stamped on Nov. 2, 2004.

You can find the complete set of raw voting machine event logs for Palm Beach County here:

<http://www.bbvforums.org/forums/messages/2197/6628.html>

Note that some items were not provided to us and are omitted from the logs.

The logs rule out the possibility that these were Logic & Accuracy (L&A) test results, and verified that these results did appear in the final totals. In addition to the date discrepancies, most had incorrect polling times, with votes appearing throughout the wee hours of the night. These machines were L&A tested, and the L&A test activities appeared in the logs with the correct date and time.

According to the voting machine assignment log, these machines were not assigned to early voting locations. The number of votes on each machine also corresponds with the numbers typical of polling place machines rather than early voting.

Many of these machines showed unexplained log activity after the L&A test but before Election Day. In addition, many more machines without date anomalies showed this log activity, which revealed someone powering up the machine, opening the program, then

powering it down again. In one instance, the date discrepancy appeared when someone accessed the machine two minutes after the L&A test was completed.

Voting machines are computers, and computers have batteries that can cause date and time discrepancies, but it does not appear that these particular discrepancies could have been caused by battery problems.

The evidence indicates that someone accessed the computers after the L&A and before the election, and that this access caused a change in the machine's reporting functions, at least for date and time. Such access would take a high degree of inside access. It is not known whether any other changes were introduced into the voting machines at this time. As learned in the Hursti experiments, it is possible for an insider to access the machines and leave no trace, but sometimes a hasty or clumsy access (such as forgetting to enter a correct date/time value when altering a record) will leave telltale tracks.

For another example of time discrepancies, see the [Volusia County poll tapes](#)

Approximately 4,000 votes were cast on these machines. The vote pattern and activity pattern appears to be identical to typical patterns found on Election Day -- All votes on the discrepant machines were spread over a 12-hour period, the length of time the Florida polls are open.

A member of the Palm Beach County electronic voting technical committee asked for the names of the technicians for Palm Beach

who had access to the machines during that time, but the IT person, Jeff Darter, remained silent and never answered the question.

The Palm Beach County Supervisor of Elections, Arthur Anderson, said that his staff had looked into the problem and that the votes were normal, it's just that the dates somehow changed.

### **Other anomalies**

<http://www.bbvforums.org/forums/messages/2197/6627.html>

(Anomaly info)

- **"Card Stuck" error:** Occured at least 70,000 times.

The logs show that these cards were placed in the machine (which normally "swallows" the card like old-fashioned ATM machines, holding the card inside until the voting activites are complete, then ejecting it). The logs show that the card was authenticated, indicating that the machine believed the card was valid and had retrieved the appropriate ballot. Just before the vote was cast, the "card stuck" error appeared.

According to Michelle Shafer, who is now the spokesperson for Sequoia Voting Systems, a card stuck error stuck error appears "any time an activation card makes contact with the activator in the electronic voting unit and comes back out. This happens for the following reasons:

- A voter does not push the card all the way in so it comes back out
- A voter inserts the card again after having already used it to vote once...
- A voter inserts the card backwards

- The card actually gets stuck in the machine (not typical)

Previously, a Sequioa rep attributed the card stuck error to jiggling the card while it is inserted, however that doesn't seem to hold up since it would take a pair of tweezers and considerable manual dexterity to jiggle it.

As to putting the card in backwards or upside down, the message that normally appears is probably the "invalid card insertion" message. Because of the high number of these errors, and because no reports were produced indicating that any voters had reported the card popping out while they were trying to vote, **Black Box Voting** recommended to Palm Beach that testing should be done to replicate the error, making sure that the explanation holds water and that there is no adverse impact on the vote.

A member of the Committee asked whether a testing day could be set up, but Jeff Darter again sat silent, and despite some prodding, no such testing appears to be on the horizon.

- **AC Power Off Incidents** Any of us who use computers know that it is not a good idea to yank the power from your machine while you are entering mission-critical data, especially without a backup. (The Palm Beach voting machines lack voter verified paper trails.)

Dozens of voting machines were turned off during the middle of the election while the polls were open. Machine # 6359 in precinct 1036 was powered down 128 times during the election.

Other power-related issues included "Main Battery not charging" and "backup battery too low".

- **"Unknown event" messages**

A handful of machines showed "unknown event" messages, apparently of different kinds. This is an interesting error message, since the FEC guidelines frown on undefined exceptions. What is the point of having an error message if you don't reveal anything about what the error is?

Machine number 5875 in Precinct 1077 showed two different "unknown errors," listing them as "unknown error 219" and "unknown error 220."

- **auto-act election info bad** and **"auto-act write ver fail"** messages also show up in the logs, with the "election info bad" message appearing hundreds of times.
- **Card encryption bad** and **Card read fail** errors also appeared, with the encryption error message the more frequent of the two.
- **Polls closed** and results report messages would be expected to appear on every voting machine at the end of the voting cycle, but these revealed problems with poll worker training and procedures at the administrative/training level. Some logs reported one report printed, some two, three, four or five, and several not only had no results tape printed but showed no closing of the polls. (Closing the polls tells the voting machine not to accept any more votes).
- **Simulation not sim task** was a message that offered no ready explanation, and another that left us wondering was the **"Maint Official AT Report"** error. Call a maintenance official? Maintain an

official AT report?

- **SyErr 23: RC/AT Verify**

and **Sys Err 31: Vote Not Rec 1** imply a system error of some type, at least one of which would affect the vote.

- **EEPROM failure**

Now this is a message you don't want to see on a voting machine. It happened a couple dozen times. It is somewhat akin to seeing a "hard disk failure" message on your computer -- not a good thing at all if you are in the process of entering critical time-sensitive data.

The logs indicate that poll workers used significantly different operating procedures from one place to another. One of the least desirable actions some poll workers were taking was to perform multiple calibrations on the machines during the day, every few hours.

Hundreds of records were simply missing, not provided at all, making it impossible to complete a formal audit.

After meeting with the authorities to determine protocols about releasing the detailed report, Black Box Voting plans to publish a detail report giving full log details on the 40 machines accessed by an insider.

### **Sequoia machines - locations**

Sequoia touch-screens are also used in Pinellas County (FL), Riverside, San Bernardino and Santa Clara countis (CA), New Mexico, New Jersey, and formerly in Snohomish County (WA).

## A sampling of Palm Beach precincts with votes appearing on wrong date/time

Precinct 3066 machine #8438 counted Oct. 15  
Precinct 3068 machine #8490 Counted Oct. 28  
Precinct 3086 machine #8316 counted Oct 14  
Precinct 2132 machine #7441 counted Oct. 15  
Precinct 6006 machine #7914 counted Oct. 14  
Precinct 6018 machine #7877 counted Oct. 14  
Precinct 4068 machine #8997 counted Oct. 16  
Precinct 5142 machine #9724 counted Oct 18  
Precinct 2072 machine #6848 counted Oct. 15  
Precinct 4140 machine #9289 counted Oct. 17  
Precinct 4084 machine #8101 counted Oct. 17

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<http://www.blackboxvoting.org>



Posted on Friday, February 24, 2006 - 07:15 am:



### Bev Harris

Board Administrator  
Username: Admin

Post Number: 3750  
Registered: 12-2004

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

Sun-Sentinel reporters have managed to get the two former Florida elections supervisors on record:

This for Volusia County, in an Orlando Sun-Sentinel story about anomalies in Palm Beach/Volusia County:

Heh. Regarding [poll tape 305](#), the Orlando Sun-Sentinel smoked a quote out of former Volusia County Supervisor of Elections Deanie Lowe:

From Sun-Sentinel, Feb. 24 2006, by Kevin Connolly:

Elections officials said the tape is printed with the correct date. The perceived 18,000-year discrepancy apparently is a reference to a series of digits that appears to be a date: 01/24/104. Someone at Black Box Voting apparently thought that meant Jan. 24, 20,104.

**Lowe said the series of numbers in question was not a date.** She wasn't sure exactly what the numbers indicated and suggested they could have been a computer code or a staff error.

Which leaves us with two possibilities:

- This former elections official has absolutely no clue how to read a poll tape or what information it contains

or

- She's lying.

But although she doesn't know how to read a poll tape, Lowe is able to discern more than even computer experts can figure out.

"In any event, it didn't change the outcome of any race," she said.

Lowe's replacement, Ann McFall, had this to say:

"I think she's trying to sell a book and there's going to be chapter on Volusia County. And I wish her well on it."

[www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/florida/orl-vblackbox2406feb24,0,234856.story?co ll=sfla-news-florida](http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/florida/orl-vblackbox2406feb24,0,234856.story?co ll=sfla-news-florida)

**And this from the Sun-Sentinel's Palm Beach reporter, Palm Beach officials:**

"there's been no proof to substantiate their comments," LePore said. "Any time she claims she has proof, because she doesn't exactly know what she's looking at, the proof that she has doesn't have anything to do with what she's saying."

and the chief IT guy for Palm Beach County, Jeff Darter, made this statement, according to Sun-Sentinel reporter Anthony Mann:

"Harris' charge of votes cast before Election Day didn't happen."

And Tony Enos, the Elections Office voting systems manager, said no one had access to the machines to make the kind of unauthorized changes described by Harris.

[www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/palmbeach/sfl-pvoting24feb24\\_0,6819551.story?col=1=sfla-news-palm](http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/palmbeach/sfl-pvoting24feb24_0,6819551.story?col=1=sfla-news-palm)

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Cast Vote 696 10/17/2004 12:29:55 AM  
1060 WEST JUPITER COMM CTR 6401 INDIANTOWN RD JUPITER 6039 Election -  
Cast Vote 697 10/17/2004 12:36:22 AM  
1060 WEST JUPITER COMM CTR 6401 INDIANTOWN RD JUPITER 6039 Election -  
Cast Vote 698 10/17/2004 12:40:31 AM  
1060 WEST JUPITER COMM CTR 6401 INDIANTOWN RD JUPITER 6039 Election -  
Cast Vote 699 10/17/2004 12:46:17 AM  
1060 WEST JUPITER COMM CTR 6401 INDIANTOWN RD JUPITER 6039 Election -  
Cast Vote 700 10/17/2004 12:57:34 AM  
1060 WEST JUPITER COMM CTR 6401 INDIANTOWN RD JUPITER 6039 Election -  
Cast Vote 701 10/17/2004 1:28:28 AM

Event log for the block containing Precinct 1060}:

[Eventlog2](#)



## Rick Ross

New BBV Member  
Username: Asterix

Post Number: 1  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box?  
★★★★  
Votes: 3 ([A keeper?](#))

Posted on Friday, February 24, 2006 - 09:26 am:



"Voting machines are computers, and computers have batteries that can cause date and time discrepancies, but it does not appear that these particular discrepancies could have been caused by battery problems."

That's the understatement of the year. :-) The battery systems in these machines are similar to the systems in your PC. A small battery powers a little clock so when the computer is off, you don't lose track of the time.

Now, when your battery starts to get low, what happens? The time on your computer becomes less and less accurate. But it is a slow, predictable process. Normal clock/battery systems easily last years before noticeable degradation occurs.

In fact, one of my machines is now losing time at a rate of about 40 seconds per week. A couple of months will go by and I'll notice I'm a few minutes off. That machine is four years old though, and regularly spends days turned off.

A very low battery may give spurious results, but that is very unlikely in the first place, and nearly impossible for a system that is maintained.

Please take any non-sense about batteries and wildly inaccurate dates with a very large grain of salt, and please feel free to contact me if you have questions.

I'm actually more of a software guy, but I'm happy to help, schedule

**Rick Ross**

New BBV Member  
Username: Asterix

Post Number: 2  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

**Rick Ross**

BBV Participant  
Username: Asterix

Post Number: 3  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

permitting.

Posted on Friday, February 24, 2006 - 09:35 am:



"Machine number 5875 in Precinct 1077 showed two different "unknown errors," listing them as "unknown error 219" and "unknown error 220." "

They may not know the cause, but the programmers know *exactly* where the problem occurred and almost certainly what was being attempted.

The reason is, they actually had to write "219" or "220" (or set a variable) explicitly. Despite the fact that they may not know the cause, there is no excuse for not reporting the circumstances.

Posted on Friday, February 24, 2006 - 09:49 am:



"auto-act election info bad and "auto-act write ver fail" messages also show up in the logs, with the "election info bad" message appearing hundreds of times."

Election info bad sounds quite a bit like a problem with the setup. So when the computer is started up, it is told (by eeprom?) what the parameters of the election are. One of those parameters would have to be the polling date. I would hope that the system would refuse to do live polling if the parameters did not match appropriately, i.e. the current date is not the polling date.

I wonder if these don't match closely with the bad dates. At the very least, the system should log an error for any vote that is done on a date that is inconsistent with the poll parameters.

"auto-act write ver fail" is quite a bit less informative. However any error that may be seen by the customer (the county) should be documented.

Do you have a description of the error codes?

Posted on Friday, February 24, 2006 - 10:20 am:



### Sharon M. Foster

New BBV Member  
Username: Smfoster

Post Number: 1  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))



Actually not even the programmers themselves necessarily know where the "unknown" errors happened. They may be using those codes in more than one place, and they aren't necessarily hard-coded. This is what comes of having no customer (i.e., State) verification and validation of the machines or the source code, no software version control, no customer acceptance test procedures, etc. We're being asked to select these machines the same way we'd buy a new laptop or MP3 player.

Posted on Friday, February 24, 2006 - 11:04 am:



### John Ruschmeyer

New BBV Member  
Username: Jruschme

Post Number: 1  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box?  
★★★★★  
Votes: 1 ([A keeper?](#))

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#### quote:

Regarding poll tape 305, the Orlando Sun-Sentinel smoked a quote out of former Volusia County Supervisor of Elections Deanie Lowe:

From Sun-Sentinel, Feb. 24 2006, by Kevin Connolly:  
Elections officials said the tape is printed with the correct date. The perceived 18,000-year discrepancy apparently is a reference to a series of digits that appears to be a date: 01/24/104. Someone at Black Box Voting apparently thought that meant Jan. 24, 20,104.

Lowe said the series of numbers in question was not a date. She wasn't sure exactly what the numbers indicated and suggested they could have been a computer code or a staff error.

Which leaves us with two possibilities:

- This former elections official has absolutely no clue how to read a poll tape or what information it contains

or

- She's lying.

---

Yikes! That **is** the date for Jan 24, 2004, but on a non-Y2K compliant application!

Somewhere in the code to write the tape is a line which says "get me the year and prepend '19' to it". Unfortunately the underlying date library is returning 3 digit numbers for the the year (and has been for almost 5 years at the time of the election).

Wonderful... my toaster has better Y2K remediation than my voting machine.



**Catherine Ansbro**

BBV Leadership Team  
Username: Catherine\_a

Post Number: 1788  
Registered: 12-2004

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))



Posted on Friday, February 24, 2006 - 11:29 am:



Bev,

Is there any way to get rid of the long lines in this thread?

It's a particularly important thread.

(From Bev: Done, thanks.)

Posted on Friday, February 24, 2006 - 12:18 pm:



**Jim March**

BBV Activist

Username: Jimmarch

Post Number: 123

Registered: 01-2005

Best of Black Box?

Votes: 1 ([A keeper?](#))

Speaking as somebody who did tech support and LAN administration for about 15 years, I can tell you that the pattern of date discrepancies does NOT look like "pure machine glitch" (hardware issues) and also doesn't look like the possible result of a bug.

The way they're mostly "clustered" in a limited date period of Oct. 13th - 20th of the correct year says to me "human intervention". It's not "randomized" the way most computer glitches are.

This is admittedly more a matter of "feel" than computer science but any geek will tell you the same.

Next: by way of Jeremiah Akin, Riverside County elections staff have said that the PS/2 keyboard port on the back is used for, among other things, "to change the date and time".

We know from the logs on the serial numbers of the machines affected that the dates were accurate during the "logic and accuracy test" typically performed up to a month before the election.

OK, let's assume the Riverside folks are right about the keyboard.

Standard practice is to do the L&A then shut the machine down and DON'T mess with it until election morning. This is basic across all voting machines and has been since the lever days going back to the 19th century.

If the date was messed with by a human with a keyboard between the time of the L&A and the time of the election, well...what the holy hell were they doing? Once the keyboard is in you can tweak the boot order in ROM, loading new code off of new media, or maybe

individual programs. (We know little about the OS on these but the boot ROM system is basically same as any laptop.)

In other words, it's not that radical a guess to say that somebody was up to something no good and the date weirdness was just a side effect.

If they were doing a very serious hack involving loading new code, it's possible that what they did hosed the date and they needed to reset it by hand...and in 40 or so cases they forgot that part?

Under this hypothesis the range of dates from the 13th to the 20th is maybe the time the "midnight black hat crew" spent touching each machine. The number of days involved is about right.

Again, this is speculation. We need the manuals on these things to understand the date function in detail. And the process by which new code or data is loaded, probably via PCMCIA card.

We need to replicate ALL these various errors and figure out how they happened, what could cause them and whether or not they're "pointers" to deeper problems, whether that's just "bad gear" or somebody actually loading a vote-shaving routine of some sort.

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TRIPLE PROTECTION FOR ELECTION 2006 - STARTING NOW:  
(1) Use Freedom of Information, public records requests ("All American Paper Chase")

- (2) Try Dumpster Diving for Democracy
- (3) Candid America Project - Don't leave home without your camcorder

HOW TO DO IT:

<http://www.bbvforums.org/forums/messages/6/6.html>



**Rick Ross**

BBV Participant

Username: Asterix

Post Number: 4

Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A

Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

Posted on Friday, February 24, 2006 - 01:39 pm:



Sharon said,

[Actually not even the programmers themselves necessarily know where the "unknown" errors happened. They may be using those codes in more than one place, and they aren't necessarily hard-coded.]

I suppose this is possible but I think you are a coder (as I am) and I think you'd agree that these would be extraordinarily bad practices. Especially 'non hardcoded' error codes which would almost guarantee an inability to detect the location of a bug, unless the bug 'tracking' part was itself bug free.

Jim said

[The way they're mostly "clustered" in a limited date period of Oct. 13th - 20th of the correct year says to me "human intervention".]

To me they suggest either tampering, or a rapid degradation of battery, resulting in a slowing of the crystal used to generate clock ticks. However, this is the type of behaviour you would expect in the last hours of a battery's life, and there is no reason a normal calculator battery can't run a crystal and a counter for years.



Posted on Friday, February 24, 2006 - 02:03 pm:



**Peter Grant**

New BBV Member  
Username: Pgrant

Post Number: 1  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

**Bev Harris**

Board Administrator  
Username: Admin

Post Number: 3751  
Registered: 12-2004

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

I did not see where anyone pointed it out, but 01/24/104 is indeed a date, albeit an incorrectly formatted one. If you read the manual for the function localtime (<http://bama.ua.edu/cgi-bin/man-cgi?localtime+3C>), you will see that the field corresponding to the year is the number of years since 1900. Thus, 104 corresponds to 2004. The fact that the date is incorrect is quite scary, as it is indicative of the carelessness of the voting program's authors. I wish I could see the code so I could tear it apart.

Posted on Friday, February 24, 2006 - 02:05 pm:



To all -- thanks very much for your comments. Regarding the Y2k error, that seems like a good possibility, as is noted on the main page where we have all those tapes and note that anomaly.

We have not seen any reference to Y2k issues in the Diebold memos, which go back to 1999, nor have I heard they were dealing with any Y2K issues from elections people who've had the machines since the early or mid-90s.

That's the whole point of examining these issues -- as Jim pointed out, one procedure, at least for the frequently occurring errors, is to do testing to replicate the error.

What they actually do, of course, is ask the VENDOR what it is. And in Palm Beach County, the vendor is busy trying to make a sale.

By the way, one of the people who was installed as a non-voting member of the technical panel in Palm Beach is our old friend, Phil Foster. Anyone want to depend on his explanation of these error messages? (He was indicted in a messy bribery case, see

[http://www.blackboxvoting.org/bbv\\_chapter-8.pdf](http://www.blackboxvoting.org/bbv_chapter-8.pdf) - Chapter 8 of the Black Box Voting book.



Posted on Friday, February 24, 2006 - 02:30 pm:



**Robert Sawdey**

BBV Citizen Watchdog  
Username: Rsawdey

Post Number: 77  
Registered: 01-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

As a programmer who has coded error reporting systems, I think I know EXACTLY what the issue is with 'Unknown Error 219'... error detection and alerting is a two step process... first layer finds the error and returns an identifying test number. Second layer presents the alert by using the test number as an index into a list of descriptive strings. When the error number is larger than the available list, 'Unknown Error XXX' is reported. This could just be another example of bad coding practices, where the list is not up to date with the testing. Would be hard to prove the list was edited for political reasons. Finding a newer version of the string tables in an updated version of the code may reveal what a '219' and a '220' is... could be a 'version control issue' as Sharon mentioned.

Jim, I don't completely agree with your observation that computer glitches are 'randomized'... computer HARDWARE with intermittent performance has 'randomized glitches'... but bad software tends to be deterministic glitches. If it wasn't, we wouldn't be successful at debugging flakey code!

John's issue of "a series of digits that appears to be a date: 01/24/104." is just the tip of the iceberg... it's noted that this is a problem with a BIOS that's not Y2K compliant... but is REALLY showing that this system would also be vulnerable to BIOS level security attacks. If the BIOS of EVERY machine hasn't been tested for Y2K compliance, then the testing procedure is obviously deeply insufficient.

Catherine's comment about long lines is much more relevant than it first appears... note that times greater than 10:00 PM push their timestamp to the next line... is this just an anomaly of their presentation on this site, or is has the string got an extra <cr-lf> inserted where there used to be a space? The latter would be evidence of poor editing procedure when hacking the results... similar evidence is in the extra blank lines in the Volusia tapes.

hehehe... kinda insulting to the REAL pros that the elections are being hacked by COMPUTER ILLITERATE AMATEURS who leave all sorts of blatant trails, even though supported in their efforts by systems designed to make audit tracing impossible. hehehe The egomaniacal 'super programmer" who designed this CAF (Computer Assisted Fraud) system wasn't near as good as he thought, fortunately!

(From BBV): The long lines were caused by a formatting anomaly, not the user's fault, and it's now corrected. That had to do with the way these forums work, and the long lines with the log entries happen to be not significant.



### **Peter Grant**

New BBV Member  
Username: Pgrant

Post Number: 2  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A Keeper?](#))

Posted on Friday, February 24, 2006 - 03:14 pm:



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I agree with most of what Robert said except the date issue. I don't believe that this is a Y2K compliance or BIOS issue. The real problem is the quality of the programmers. The system functions that return the time give years that are offset by 1900. Therefore, the year 2000 is represented by 100, 2004 by 104, and so forth. The programmers could have corrected this value easily but were probably unaware of it. Likewise, the programmers probably failed to realize that the month is offset by 1. The date in question, 01/24/104, likely corresponds to 02/24/2004. There is nothing truly wrong about the

dates except that they are misleading--providing an incorrect date, IMHO, is much worse than omitting dates entirely.

Whether the machines are vulnerable to a BIOS-level attack is another issue entirely, although such an attack would probably not take the form of a Y2K-like bug. In most cases, software-level security measures are effective only if the hardware cannot be tampered with. Of course, there are mechanisms to detect this kind of tampering, but then there are mechanisms to avoid the detection, and so on.



**Cody Barnes**

New BBV Member

Username:

General\_fault

Post Number: 1

Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A

Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

Posted on Friday, February 24, 2006 - 03:46 pm:



If this were a battery issue, we should be able to open up these machines now and verify that they indeed have a dead battery. Additionally, the system date on these machines would be even further off than they were before. This should be VERY easy to verify... that is, if you can get access to the machines in question.

In the past, when I have run across a bad battery in a computer (and I have run across my share), the result is a date in 1970 (depending on how long the computer has been running). This is a result of the date getting reset to 0 every time the computer is turned on. I have never seen a "slow" date due to a low battery. I would assume that almost all modern bios have voltage regulators built in. Thus the power would remain constant to the time keeping crystal until the voltage went below a certain level, then there would be no power to the crystal.



**Asterix**

Posted on Friday, February 24, 2006 - 04:59 pm:



BBV Participant  
Username: Asterix

Post Number: 5  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))



### **Asterix**

BBV Participant  
Username: Asterix

Post Number: 6  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))



### **Robert Sawdey**

BBV Citizen Watchdog  
Username: Rsawdey

Post Number: 88

### **quote:**

I would assume that almost all modern bios have voltage regulators...

---

That's quite likely true, although the regulator could just be ensuring that you don't over power the crystal rather than preventing undervoltages (which are not likely to be dangerous).

What then is the hardware cause for a bios date being slow? It happens on my PCs all the time and replacing the batteries does appear to fix it. Not being an ass here (at least not

Posted on Friday, February 24, 2006 - 05:00 pm:



Oops.. continuing :

(at least not intentionally) you have now piqued my curiosity.

Posted on Friday, February 24, 2006 - 06:21 pm:



In 1999 (98?) MS provided an alternate 'get date' routine that returned a 'long' year rather than a 'short' offset from 1970 (founding date of MS), to fix the Y2K issue... the old routine remains to provide 'legacy' compatibility. If it says 20104 then it's stale code using the obsolete routine.

Registered: 01-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

Peter notes, correctly, that any such BIOS based attack probably wouldn't take the form of a date/time function anomaly (could, would be tricky)... but my point was that the BIOS isn't checked even to THIS level, then anything else is possible... the BIOS code isn't being checked at all. IMHO, any OpenSource system would have to have NO BIOS, with all I/O routines visible in the OpenSource... and running on a hardware protected processor's intrinsic ROM memory!

Voltage regulation is a hardware function unrelated to the BIOS (Basic Input Output Operating System) or the EBIOS (the 32 bit functions that replace the BIOS for operation of a 32 bit OS on a 32 bit Processor) which replaces the BIOS when the processor switches from 16 bit to 32 bit mode. (All Intel processors start up as if they were 8086s, then get smarter). Low voltage of the clock chip can cause it to run slow... the PC design essentially acknowledges this, because the system clock switches to 'Mains' power ASAP. You'll only 'lose time' Asterix when the system is switched off.

(Ou et Opterix?)



**Jimbo Dinkis**  
New BBV Member  
Username: Apaxi716

Post Number: 1  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

Posted on Friday, February 24, 2006 - 07:21 pm:



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I could code a VBA macro in Excel that could record votes better than the ●●● they used in FL. What the hell are we doing in this country? Time to move to Canada or somewhere in Europe where people are a little bit more intelligent than the average American. Darwinism always wins.

**Peter Grant**

BBV Participant

Username: Pgrant

Post Number: 3

Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A

Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

Posted on Friday, February 24, 2006 - 10:19 pm:



Jimbo makes the same point that we have all been making: voting is such a simple process that it is ridiculous that a company could screw it up this much. Granted, a lot of the functionality in these machines is quite complex, but one would think that the primary functionality--the recording of votes--would take precedence over secondary features when it comes to testing and verification. If the machine records timestamps in a log file that are not human-readable, why even have a log file?

However, one must question the government's role in all of this. The government presumably has standards and some kind of QA process for these machines, and yet the quality is so poor. If there is really anyone to blame, it is the government for accepting such an awful product. It just makes me sick that my tax dollars pay for such junk. This kind of thing would not stand in the corporate world. If I delivered a product that was supposed to be production-quality and it had these "unknown error" messages in it, I would be out of work.

**Dan Beutel**

New BBV Member

Username: Dbeutel

Post Number: 1

Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A

Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

Posted on Saturday, February 25, 2006 - 12:21 am:



Being that my current job has me in a split dev/test role, the debate surrounding these voting machines has been very interesting (not to mention scary) for me. I remember reading/seeing something somewhere (maybe even here on bbvoting) a while back about the amount of QA oversight on these machines, and that it was virtually nil. This scares the hell out of me. I work on a product that's about as far removed from the government as can be (a rather well-known IDE... that isn't Eclipse, I'll leave you to figure it out), and we have literally thousands of people staffing our QA teams. The fact that a system for choosing the president, among others, could have been



## Griffith

New BBV Member  
Username: Griffith

Post Number: 1  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

been so insufficiently tested (whether intentionally or due to plain incompetence) just blows my mind.

Posted on Saturday, February 25, 2006 - 05:24 am:



Hmmm... noting that the logs were only occurring in some areas, I think we've drawn upon the following hypotheses:

- 1) That all machines were running Windows 98 or earlier, and some failed to be patched for Y2k;
- 2) That some machines were running earlier versions of the voting software than others (which may indicate tampering with machines to take software back to easily hackable versions that didn't know when to start and stop voting. This would explain 'unknown errors' and 'auto-act election info bad');
- 3) That someone was fiddling with the dates. I am assuming here that should have caused a 'election info bad' report if the date was set wrong. But what if hypothesis 2 is correct?



## Gordon Kulzer

New BBV Member  
Username: Gordo

Post Number: 1  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

Posted on Saturday, February 25, 2006 - 06:55 am:



DUH,WHAT IF IT WAS INTENTIONALLY PLANTED JUST THE WAY IT WAS FOR YOU ALL TO DRAW THESE VERY CONCLUSIONS?EVERYONE THINKS THEY'RE AN EXPERT THESE DAYS WHEN THEY ARE IGNORANT TO MOST OF THE INFORMATION TO DRAW CONCLUSIONS FROM.  
ALL OF THIS HIGH TECH CAN BE MANIPULATED BY SOMEBODY,SO WHY USE IT? THE ONLY REASON IS TO DO JUST THAT OR TO QUESTION EVERY RESULT THAT DOESN'T COME OUT THE WAY "YOU" LIKE!  
WITH VOTING A SIMPLE YET SO IMPORTANT PROCESS LET'S STICK

TO A VARIFIABLE PAPER BALLOT!  
GORDO



Posted on Saturday, February 25, 2006 - 07:01 am:



**Catherine Ansbro**

BBV Leadership Team  
Username: Catherine\_a

Post Number: 1799  
Registered: 12-2004

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))



Griffith (full name?)

What about the option that the dates are accurate (except for the Y2K issue), and they indicate the times when someone accessed the machine in question to tamper with it?

**Gordon Kulzer**

New BBV Member  
Username: Gordo

Post Number: 2  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))



Posted on Saturday, February 25, 2006 - 07:17 am:



I love the way we can cherry pick info that is legit and info that isn't, sounds like congress.

**From BBV Admin: Gordo, why should any information that is not "legit" appear in the official voting machine logs?**

**Mike Myhre**

New BBV Member  
Username: Mike\_myhre

Post Number: 2  
Registered: 02-2006

Posted on Saturday, February 25, 2006 - 09:38 am:



You can argue all day about why the dates may be displaying as they are, but if the date is set by a keyboard, not tied to a central time reference, anyone could have set (or not set) the date to this strange value. The method and obviously poorly written program does not lend credibility to the machines.

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

If the bogus dates are consistent on a machine (no normal dates intermixed with the bogus ones), that does not imply any hacking was done. As long as the time/dates increment for each log entry and only specify a single day, they could have come from a legitimate election with just the date set wrong.

The log I reviewed had a lot of 10/15 dates followed by 11/2 dates on many machines as if someone set the date correctly after voting had started. If the dates had gone back to an earlier date and then back to 11/2 that would have indicated possible tampering. I sorted the event log by pct#, serial number, protective counter to get what should be a log sequence order. (not sure what order they were before)

While this is an incredible display of bad product design and programming, I don't believe the dates I looked at indicate tampering. (yet)

I think there are other anomalies that scream foul play much louder than the details of the dates.



### Bev Harris

Board Administrator  
Username: Admin

Post Number: 3752  
Registered: 12-2004

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

Posted on Saturday, February 25, 2006 - 11:16 am:



Jimbo Dinkis, Asterix, Griffith -- Please edit your real first and last name into your profile, as we have a "real names" policy here. This encourages accountability and raises the quality level of the posts.

### **I need to clarify something**

Just to make sure there is no mixing of apples and oranges.

Volusia County documents are DIEBOLD.

Palm Beach County documents are SEQUOIA.

Thus, the technical issues from one can't necessarily be extrapolated over to the other.

### Another point of interest

Palm Beach County could not have known that these logs would ever be examined by any member of the public. No one had been requesting them before.

In speaking with the Palm Beach County citizens this week, I learned that "something happened" around 11 p.m. or so on election night Nov. 2, 2004, and Theresa LePore was "*freaked out*" and appeared extremely stressed. She was reportedly screaming at people by this point.

I got to thinking -- was there anything that happened around 11 p.m. in Palm Beach County?

One thing happened that I'm aware of. The Black Box Voting public records request for these logs arrived simultaneously by e-mail and fax right around 11 p.m. Eastern time, election night, Nov. 2 2004 in Palm Beach County.



**Bev Harris**

Board Administrator

Username: Admin

Posted on Saturday, February 25, 2006 - 11:20 am:



For Mike Myre:

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**quote:**

Post Number: 3753  
Registered: 12-2004

The log I reviewed had a lot of 10/15 dates followed by 11/2 dates on many machines as if someone set the date correctly after voting had started.

---

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

You are seeing a 10/15 Logic & Accuracy test and Nov. 2 votes.

The anomalous tapes had no votes on Nov. 2.

Also, nothing is supposed to be changed -- and that would include setting the date -- after the L&A test. We can confirm that the problems took place after the L&A test.



Posted on Saturday, February 25, 2006 - 11:31 am:



**Sharon M. Foster**  
New BBV Member  
Username: Smfoster

Post Number: 2  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

I actually do consider myself an expert, having developed system- and mission-critical systems for jet engine controls, nuclear power plant controls, and numerous data communications systems for over 30 years. I gather from the content of their postings that several other people here are also professional software engineers.

Yes, all the types of errors we are speculating about indicate extraordinarily bad programming practices. That was my whole point. No one has any oversight into these companies and their so-called practices. They guard their code and internal processes on the grounds of "proprietary company information." I say Hogwash! These systems are developed for "customers" that are state governments. They are paid for with taxpayer dollars. They should be subjected to the same scrutiny as the engine control and power plant control software that I have worked on.

Here are just a couple of examples from the problems we already

knew about before this latest news from Palm Beach. In Ohio people complained that when they used the touch-screen machines, the wrong candidates were selected. This tells me that the touch-screen had not been calibrated. A system that hasn't been calibrated yet should start up in the calibration screen and stay there until the calibration has been completed. No ifs, ands, or buts. Another problem reported from Ohio had to do with a negative vote count. That tells me that a 16-bit signed variable was used that should have been a 32-bit variable. The vulnerability to tampering has already been demonstrated by direct experiment.

Obviously there was (1) no internal sanity checking in the software and (2) no code inspection and (3) insufficient testing before and after delivery of the systems. I could go on, but you get my drift. This is either deliberate, in order to "fix" elections, or incompetent. I don't like either possibility, but maybe I can do something about the second one, which is to continue to speak up.



**Jo Anne Karasek**

BBV Activist

Username:

Jo\_anne\_karasek

Post Number: 104

Registered: 08-2005

Best of Black Box? N/A

Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))



Posted on Saturday, February 25, 2006 - 03:31 pm:



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Sharon M. Foster, what would you say about the fact that votes switched from Kerry to Bush 12:1 rather than Bush to Kerry.

[http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=show\\_topic&forum=203 &topic\\_id=371211](http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=show_topic&forum=203 &topic_id=371211)

Posted on Saturday, February 25, 2006 - 03:50 pm:



**Sharon M. Foster**

BBV Participant  
Username: Smfoster

Post Number: 3  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

**Robin Baneth**

New BBV Member  
Username:  
Wheelofvoter

Post Number: 1  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

Jo Anne, that's another important aspect of the problems reported in 2004. If true, they do seem to point to deliberate tampering. Immediately after the 11/04 election, there was a preliminary statistical analysis of the Florida election that seemed to show that precincts with a certain type of e-voting machine always skewed in the same direction, often counter to that precinct's traditional voting patterns. After there had been time to review it, I recall that there were some problems with the analysis. I don't recall who wrote it, and I haven't seen anything about it since.

In Ohio, the voting results often did not track with the exit polls. Exit polls haven't been wrong in, what? over 50 years? Soemthing definitely went wrong in 2004, and it had everything to do with e-voting, in my personal opinion. Proving it is another matter. As long as the machines are not subject to any scrutiny...

Posted on Saturday, February 25, 2006 - 08:35 pm:



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We need to take a step back and realize there is no shortage of smoking guns here. The problem is getting one to resonate in the public's short attention span. You think an EEPROM error is going to resonate with a Home Depot employee? We have plenty of fuel for an all our public relations effort on election fraud but the errors need be concise and easy to describe. Incorrect Dates in logs would play well. The real problem with all of this is that you no longer need to be bright to hack these machines. We know there are folks who kill clinic doctors and believe it "God's will to put pro-life candidates in office." I think we can rule out al Qaeda although Osama may be happy with the US bankrupting itself. Let's not overthink or over-intellectualize what is going on here. Simplify. Bullet Points. Academia Bad. Common Sense good. It's the bullets stupid.

**Robin Baneth**

New BBV Member  
Username:  
Wheelofvoter

Post Number: 2  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

Posted on Saturday, February 25, 2006 - 08:47 pm:



Let's work on our FOXNEWS crawl headlines: 1) Voting machines show traces of very early voting!; 2) Voting machines not Y2K compliant!; 3) Voting machines proven to be slower and less accurate than lever machines!; 4) Thousands of Votes switched from Kerry to Bush; 5) Another Voting Machine executive arrested; 6) Cincinatti Bell CEO is former Diebold exec; given remote access to voting machines; 7) Vote manipulators arrested; discuss how they did it.

The public does not know the difference between Central Tabulators and DREs. Let's call them all voting machines. No need to differentiate except in technical committee. These hackers revel in the difficulty has describing what was done; they pick techniques that are hard to easily explain. Don't fall into their trap. We here know rebooting means software/hardware issues but the public doesn't care if they feel most machines got it right. They need to know that just a few battleground counties in Ohio can turn one state and that is all it takes. Hardly a vast conspiracy.

**Benjamin M. Atkin**

New BBV Member  
Username: Benatkin

Post Number: 1  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

Posted on Saturday, February 25, 2006 - 09:26 pm:



This is very worrisome. Having looked into the way the electronic voting machines were designed, with little care to who programs them or how it is done, I knew that the election departments would not want these machines to be audited. It is just mind-boggling that these were programmed by people without security clearances, when it is just as important of a part of our democracy as defense.

Besides the suspicious dates, there seem to be glitches. A lot of them. In something as simple as this, glitches should not be an every

day occurrence. If the management and programming were sound, it would be as reliable as the computers inside an airplane.

I too think that when talking to people who are not knowledgeable about computers, we should use easy-to-understand things like "incorrect dates" and not esoteric things like "EEPROM failures".

Posted on Sunday, February 26, 2006 - 03:21 am:



### Catherine Ansbro

BBV Leadership Team  
Username: Catherine\_a

Post Number: 1802  
Registered: 12-2004

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))



### Linda Franz

BBV Leadership Team  
Username: Linda\_franz

Post Number: 209  
Registered: 12-2004

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

And these are NOT "glitches."

They are **defects** and should be referred to as such.

Posted on Sunday, February 26, 2006 - 08:54 am:



There is some great input here.

If these kinds of reviews can be elicited just by examining the tapes, one can only imagine what a full blown examination of the code would produce.

Based on the reviews of the tapes, it would be criminal let alone a complete refusal to do due diligence, to not demand complete code review.

Voting is mission critical for democracy.

There is no excuse for not examining the code that purports to count our votes.

While the date issue is important, it is also important to put it in context, so that date issues are not just treated as a "glitch"- either human or machine.

Maybe a list of follow up questions for the media when they get the same old, pat non-answers to questions?

They've been getting those answers long enough now, with no let up in the problems that prompt the questions, that it's time to really dig.

Edited as/per John below. I'm 🙄

(Message edited by Linda\_Franz on February 26, 2006)



**Catherine Ansbro**

BBV Leadership Team  
Username: Catherine\_a

Post Number: 1804  
Registered: 12-2004

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))



**John Howard**

Posted on Sunday, February 26, 2006 - 09:12 am:



Linda,

Agree completely. The media response so far is an attempt to trivialize "wrong dates", implying, what's the big deal with some dates being wrong. There needs to be a more direct line between the wrong dates and the possible implications, in such a way that the inconsistencies cannot be trivialized.

Posted on Sunday, February 26, 2006 - 12:33 pm:



*There is no excuse for not examining the code that purports to count*

BBV Leadership Team  
Username: Harmonyguy

Post Number: 272  
Registered: 12-2004

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))



**Sharon M. Foster**

BBV Participant  
Username: Smfoster

Post Number: 4  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box?  
★★★★★  
Votes: 1 ([A keeper?](#))



**Sharon M. Foster**

BBV Participant  
Username: Smfoster

Post Number: 5  
Registered: 02-2006

*our ballots.*

I know what you meant. Let's all be careful of what we call a vote and what we call a ballot.

Posted on Sunday, February 26, 2006 - 02:50 pm:



Catherine, Linda, John, Bev,

PLEASE OH PLEASE let me be on the testing/code inspection team, if that ever comes to pass. I don't think it will--those companies know that their code couldn't withstand any kind of close scrutiny, in their rush to get to market in time for the 2004 election. But it COULD happen, if we keep pounding on our elected representatives.

A few days ago, in response to the news from California, I posted a copy of the letter I sent to my representatives several months ago. I will be updating it soon and sending it out again. You can read it here: <http://exsoftware.blogspot.com/2006/02/its-not-who-votes-that-counts-its-who.htm> I

Posted on Sunday, February 26, 2006 - 03:08 pm:



I just found out that AP is now reporting this story, but get this:

"Palm Beach County election officials said the BlackBoxVoting.com findings are flawed, and they blamed most of the errors on voters not following proper procedures."

This sounds an awful lot like the butterfly-ballot fiasco of 2000,

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))



**Catherine Ansbro**  
BBV Leadership Team  
Username: Catherine\_a

Post Number: 1805  
Registered: 12-2004

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))



**Sharon M. Foster**  
BBV Participant  
Username: Smfoster

Post Number: 6  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A

blaming the users for the bad design and implementation of the machines. Do you know what would have happened if I'd tried that excuse-- "User error"--on my customers when I was a software developer? I would have gotten walked out the door that very day, but not before having my head handed to me. You're supposed to design the damned machines so that the user CANNOT make an error. This is not rocket science. We've known how to do this for several decades now.

Posted on Sunday, February 26, 2006 - 03:14 pm:



Great letter. Thanks for the link.

Question for you (Sharon): Your letter makes it clear that in your professional experience testing and inspecting software for many kinds of mission critical applications, there was never any question of trade secrets being used to prevent customers from inspecting either software code or other equipment. Did any of this software ever rely on a proprietary foundation such as MS Windows or other 3rd party proprietary code? If so, how did this affect your inspection/testing protocol? Was the customer allowed access to the other 3rd party code with appropriate NDA agreements? Or was such access denied?

Posted on Sunday, February 26, 2006 - 05:44 pm:



Catherine, the power plant controls and flight controls systems were not based on Windows or any off-the-shelf O/S kernel, although the power plant controls did incorporate a commercial graphics package for drawing buttons and other objects for a touch screen panel. With the proper NDAs in place, yes, the customer had access to the commercial software as well. We had to customize the commercial software to run on our hardware, so the modules that we changed were subjected to the same testing that we would do on any

Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

software that was developed internally.

I also worked on equipment that made precise measurements of the mirrors for the Chandra X-Ray telescope. The station software was Windows-based (well, DOS, really) and was not a deliverable, and as far as I know the customer did not perform a line by line code inspection, but they were continuously auditing our test procedures and test results through the office of DCMA (Defense Contract Management Agency), (as were the other projects I mentioned). That's how the voting machine contracts should have been handled as well, in my opinion.

Using Windows as the platform may have been the first mistake, due to its security problems. A properly-written RFQ from a state government that was looking to purchase machines would include clear and unambiguous security requirements. Sure, Windows might get you to market faster--in theory. I can see how using Windows might complicate code inspection, but I can write a Windows application without seeing the Windows source code, and still allow my code to be inspected. But even if that were really a valid issue, that just means that the system-level testing must be very thorough, to make up for the lack of code inspection and module-level testing. All the evidence suggests that Diebold et al did none of this testing. And even if they did, we don't know if the software they delivered, or the software that was in place on election day, was the software they tested. The state agencies that purchased the machines bear some of the responsibility, too, and of course they have been hampered in doing that by HAVA.



Posted on Monday, February 27, 2006 - 06:00 am:



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p.s. Regarding the claims of "user error," I had some more thoughts

**Sharon M. Foster**

BBV Participant  
Username: Smfoster

Post Number: 7  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

**Peter Grant**

BBV Participant  
Username: Pgrant

Post Number: 4  
Registered: 02-2006

Best of Black Box? N/A  
Votes: 0 ([A keeper?](#))

about that this morning. The last time an ATM fined my checking account \$10 for putting in my card upside-down was NEVER. But this is what the vendors and state election supervisors seem to be condoning.

Viewing this in the most favorable light possible, this is incompetence on their part, and breach of contract on the part of the vendors. If the machines that the vendors delivered do happen to meet the requirements of HAVA and of the States' various RFOs, then HAVA and the States' acquisition processes are broken and need to be fixed. This is a technical, legal, and managerial issue. It's not necessary that this become a partisan issue, although that is probably inevitable, given the political climate.

Posted on Monday, February 27, 2006 - 01:05 pm:



A vendor can claim that a problem is the result of user error only if the vendor never received a set of well-defined user requirements. However, Palm Beach County was the customer, so it was their responsibility to ensure that the user requirements were well-defined and were met. If the requirements were not met, then the machines should not have been purchased.

Requiring users of a computer system to follow a procedure is not likely to work unless that procedure is enforced by the system. This is why procedures are enforced by so-called Wizards. Putting a lot of buttons on a screen says to the user, "You are allowed to push these buttons as you see fit--there is no procedure here."

Furthermore, verification of user input is a given in any computer system. They teach this in the first computer science class you ever take. How many web sites allow you to submit a blank form? Have

you ever accidentally typed your email address where your phone number was supposed to go? If so, you had to change the information before it was accepted, right?

Even with Palm Beach County's liberal definition of user error, I fail to see how any of the discrepancies in the results could have come from user error. A more likely explanation is that Palm Beach County representatives did not evaluate the voting machines thoroughly because they were under pressure to become HAVA-compliant, and now they are passing the buck. Perhaps they should change the name of the Act from HAVA (Help Americans Vote Act) to BANK (Blame Americans for Not Knowing). I doubt the voting system vendors would hesitate to say their machines are BANK-compliant. They've got our tax dollars, after all.

I'm sure a lot of you are more familiar with voting standards than I am. The only Florida Voting System Standards document I could find was [Form DS-DE 101 \(pdf\)](#), which became effective after 2004. Can anyone point me at the standards that were effective in 2004? I want to see how much I should punish myself for not knowing how to vote properly.

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