

Departments
Election Issues

Are Rove's missing e-mails the smoking guns of the stolen 2004 election?
 by *Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman*
 April 25, 2007

E-mails being sought from Karl Rove's computers, and recent revelations about critical electronic conflicts of interest, may be the smoking guns of Ohio's stolen 2004 election. A former recount of ballots and electronic files, preserved by a federal lawsuit, could tell the tale.

The major media has come to focus on a large batch of electronic communications which have disappeared from the server of the Republican National Committee, and from White House advisor Rove's computers. The attention stems from the controversial firing of eight federal prosecutors by Attorney-General Alberto Gonzales.

But the time frame from which these e-mails are missing also includes a critical late night period after the presidential election of 2004. In these crucial hours, computerized vote tallies may have been shifted to move the Ohio vote count from John Kerry to George W. Bush, giving Bush the presidency.

Earlier that day, Rove and Bush flew into Columbus. Local election officials say they met with Ohio Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell in Columbus. Also apparently in attendance was Matt Damschroder, executive director of the Franklin County (Columbus) Board of Elections.

These four men, along with Ohio GOP chair Bob Bennett, were at the core of a multi-pronged strategy that gave Bush Ohio's twenty Electoral College votes, and thus the presidency. Bennett and Damschroder held key positions on election boards in the state's two most populous counties, with the biggest inner city concentrations of Democratic voters.

There were four key phases to the GOP's election theft strategy:

1. Prior to the election, the GOP focused on massive voter disenfranchisement, with a selective reduction of voter turnout in urban Democratic strongholds. Blackwell issued confusing and contradictory edicts on voter eligibility, registration requirements, and provisional ballots; on shifting precinct locations; on denial and misprinting of absentee ballots, and more. Among other things, election officials, including Bennett, stripped nearly 300,000 voters from registration rolls in heavily Democratic areas in Cleveland, Cincinnati and Toledo.
2. On election day, the GOP focussed on voter intimidation, denial of voting rights to legally eligible ex-felons, denial of voting machines to inner city precincts, malfunctioning of those machines, destruction of provisional ballots and more.
3. After the final tabulation of the votes, and the announcement that Bush had won, the GOP strategy focussed on subverting a statewide recount. A filing by the Green and Libertarian Parties required Ohio's 88 county boards of election to conduct random precinct samplings, to be followed by recounts where necessary.

A lawsuit was filed to delay the seating of Ohio's Electoral College delegation until after the recount was completed. Among other things, the plaintiffs sued to get access to Rove's laptop. But Blackwell rushed to certify the delegation before a recount could be completed. The issue became moot, and the suit was dropped. In retaliation, Blackwell tried to impose legal sanctions on the attorneys who filed it.

But two felony convictions have thus far resulted from what prosecutors have called the "rigging" of the recount in Cuyahoga County (where Bennett has been forced to resign his chairmanship of the board of elections). More are likely to follow.

The practices that led to these convictions were apparently repeated in many of Ohio's 88 counties. The order to violate the law---or at least tacit approval to do so---is almost certain to have come from Blackwell.



Don't forget to check out articles from **2006** and **2007**

Election Issues

"Introducing Psephos"
 April 25, 2007

"Are Rove's missing e-mails the smoking guns of the stolen 2004 election?"
 April 25, 2007

"The GOP's cyber election hit squad"
 April 22, 2007

"Another path to peace: the case for Kucinich"
 April 19, 2007

"Virtual election season"
 April 16, 2007

"Bye bye to Cleveland GOP Election Chair Bob "Ballots for Bush" Bennett"
 April 16, 2007

"Bye bye to Cleveland GOP Election Chair Bob "Ballots for Bush" Bennett"
 April 15, 2007

"Auditing the mid-term election"
 April 6, 2007

"Two big victories boost Ohio's election protection movement"
 April 5, 2007

"More potential 2004 election illegalities rock Ohio's Hocking County as Cleveland braces for a legal firestorm"
 March 30, 2007

"New Ohio evidence exposes apparently illegal 2004 recount activity by Hocking County's GOP Election Director, and a stinging complaint is filed in Cleveland"
 March 26, 2007

"Explosive new vote fraud developments continue to rock Ohio and Florida"
 March 23, 2007

"Forced resignations and stiff prison sentences intensify the

4. Ultimately, however, it is the GOP's computerized control of the vote count that may have been decisive. And here is where Rove's e-mails, and the wee hours of the morning after the election, are crucial.

Despite the massive disenfranchisement of Ohio Democrats, there is every indication John Kerry won Ohio 2004. Exit polls shown on national television at 12:20am gave Kerry a clear lead in Ohio, Iowa, Nevada and New Mexico. These "purple states" were Democratic blue late in the night, but, against virtually impossible odds, all turned Bush red by morning.

Along the way, Gahanna, Ohio's "loaves & fishes" vote count, showed 4,258 ballots for Bush in a precinct where just 638 people voted. Voting machines in Youngstown and Columbus lit up for Bush when Kerry's name was pushed. Rural Republican precincts registered more than 100% turnouts, while inner city Democratic ones went as low as 7%. Warren County declared a "Homeland Security" alert, removed the ballot count from public scrutiny, then recorded a huge, unlikely margin for Bush.

These and many more instances of irregularities and theft were reported at www.freepress.org and then confirmed by U.S. Representative John Conyers and others who researched the election.

But the most critical reversals may have come as exit polls indicated that despite massive Democratic disenfranchisement, and even with preliminary vote count manipulations, Kerry would win Ohio by 4.2%, a margin well in excess of 200,000 votes.

The key to that reversal may be electronic. It has now become widely known that the same web-hosting firm that served a range of GOP websites, including the one for the Republican National Committee, also hosted the official site that Blackwell used to report the Ohio vote count.

This astonishing conflict of interest has been reported at the epluribusmedia.org on-line investigative service. Cross-postings have come from luaptifer at Dailykos and blogger Joseph Cannon's Cannonfire.blogspot.com. They all confirm that the RNC tech network's hosting firm is SMARTech.com, based in Chattanooga, Tennessee. SMARTech hosts georgew.bush.com, mc.org and gop.com among other Republican web domains, in a bank basement.

Furthermore, the same hosting site that handled redirections from Blackwell's "official" site also handled the White House e-mail accounts that have become central to investigations of the Gonzales purge of eight federal prosecutors, some of whom were themselves involved in vote fraud investigations.

Conflicts of interest in programming services and remote-access capability appear throughout the RNC's computer networks, Rove's secret White House e-mail, and the electronic vehicles used by Blackwell to finally reveal his "official" presidential vote counts for Ohio 2004.

One factor may be Ohio's electronic touch-screen voting systems, on which were cast more than 800,000 votes in an election decided by about one-seventh that total. Such vulnerabilities, among other things, have been confirmed in exhaustive reports by Conyers's Committee, by the Government Accountability Office, by the Carter-Baker Commission, by Princeton University, by the Brennan Center, and by others.

But overall, the electronic record of every vote in Ohio was transmitted to the Secretary of State's office, and hosted in real time in Chattanooga. Under such circumstances, the joint hosting of the White House e-mail system and accessibility by Blackwell and Rove to the same computer networks linked to the Ohio vote count, takes on an added dimension.

Mike Connell, a Republican computer expert, helped create the software for both Ohio's official 2004 election web site, and for the Bush campaign's partisan web site during the 2000 election. The success of Connell's GovTech Solutions has been attributed by Connell to his being "loyal to my network," including the Bush family.

Blackwell shared those loyalties. Like Connell, he worked for the Bush-Cheney campaign, serving as its Ohio co-chair. He was also in control of the vote count that was being reported on software Bush loyalist Connell helped design.

It was in a crucial period after midnight on election night 2004 that these paired conflicts of interest may have decided the election. As exit polls showed a decisive Kerry victory, there was an unexplained 90-minute void in official reporting of results. By this time, most of the vote counts were coming in from rural areas, which are traditionally Republican, and which, ironically, usually report their results earlier than the Democratic urban areas.

In this time span, Kerry's lead morphed into a GOP triumph. To explain this "miraculous" shift, Rove invented a myth of the greatest last-second voting surge in US history, allegedly coming from late-voting fundamentalist Republicans. No significant evidence exists to substantiate this claim. In fact, local news reports indicate the heaviest turnouts in most rural areas came early on election day, rather than later.

escalating blowback from Ohio's 2004 stolen election"

March 20, 2007

"Election fraud, my ass"

March 16, 2007

"After Ohio's recount rigging convictions in Cuyahoga, is Coshocton County next?"

March 6, 2007

"Florida setting example"

March 3, 2007

"Sequoia Voting Systems contract with San Francisco needs added section to ensure transparency"

February 13, 2007

"Ohio's spreading stolen 2004 election scandal claims another victim"

February 10, 2007

"First criminal convictions from Ohio's stolen 2004 election confirm recount was rigged"

January 27, 2007

"Election attorneys amplify importance of convictions for recount rigging in Ohio 2004 presidential race"

January 26, 2007

"Do new Ohio recount prosecutions indicate unraveling of 2004 election theft cover-up?"

January 19, 2007

"The mystic voting hall: for the love of democracy"

January 5, 2007

"DREs, magic and other sleights of hand"

January 4, 2007

Read Articles by Year:
2007 2006 2005 2004
2003 2002 2001 2000

Cosmo*
Community Shares of Mid Ohio

All content © 1970-2007
The Columbus Free Press
Disclaimer

According to a January 13, 2005, release from Cedarville University, a small Ohio-based Christian academy, Connell's GovTech Solutions helped make the shared server system run "like a champ...through the early morning hours as users from around the world looked to Ohio for their election results."

After 2am, despite exit polls showing very much the opposite outcome, those results put Bush back in the White House.

In January, 2005, the U.S. Congress hosted the first challenge to a state's Electoral College delegation in our nation's history. At the time, the compromised security of the official Ohio electronic reporting systems was not public knowledge. But the first attempt to subpoena Karl Rove's computer files had already failed.

Now a second attempt to gain such access is being mounted as the Gonzales scandal deepens.

Congressman Henry A. Waxman (D-CA) has raised "particular concerns about Karl Rove" and his electronic communications about the Gonzales firings.

Rove claims both his own computer records and the RNC's servers have been purged of e-mails through the time the Ohio vote was being reversed. Rove's attorney, Robert Kuskin, has told a Congressional inquiry that Rove mistakenly believed his messages to the RNC "were being archived" there.

But the RNC says it has no e-mail records for Rove before 2005. Rob Kelner, an RNC lawyer says efforts to recreate the lost records have had some success. But it's not yet known whether communications from the 2004 election can be retrieved.

Nor is it known whether the joint access allowed to top GOP operatives Rove and Blackwell was responsible for the election-night reversal that put Bush back in the White House.

But there remains another avenue by which the real outcome of Ohio 2004 could be discovered. Longstanding federal law protected Ohio's ballots and other election documentation prior to September 3, 2006. Blackwell gave clear orders that these crucial records were to be destroyed on that date.

Prior to the expiration of the federal statutory protection, a civil rights lawsuit was filed in the federal court of Judge Algernon Marbley, asking that the remaining records be preserved. The request was granted in what has become known as the King-Lincoln Bronzeville suit (co-author Bob Fittrakis is an attorney in the case, and Harvey Wasserman is a plaintiff).

Thus, by federal law, the actual ballots and electronic records should be available for the kind of exhaustive recount that was illegally denied---or "rigged," as prosecutors in Cleveland have put it---by Blackwell, Bennett and their cohorts the first time around.

Ohio's newly-elected Secretary of State, Jennifer Brunner, has agreed to take custody of these materials, and to bring them to a central repository, probably in Columbus.

This means that an exhaustive recount could show who really did win the presidential election of 2004.

It may also be possible to learn what roles---electronic or otherwise--- Karl Rove and J. Kenneth Blackwell really did play during those crucial 90 minutes in the deep night, when the presidency somehow slipped from John Kerry to George W. Bush.

--

Bob Fittrakis & Harvey Wasserman are co-authors of HOW THE GOP STOLE AMERICA'S 2004 ELECTION & IS RIGGING 2008, available at www.freepress.org and, with Steve Rosenfeld, of WHAT HAPPENED IN OHIO?, from the New Press. Fittrakis is publisher, and Wasserman is senior editor, of www.freepress.org.

Email this article to a friend