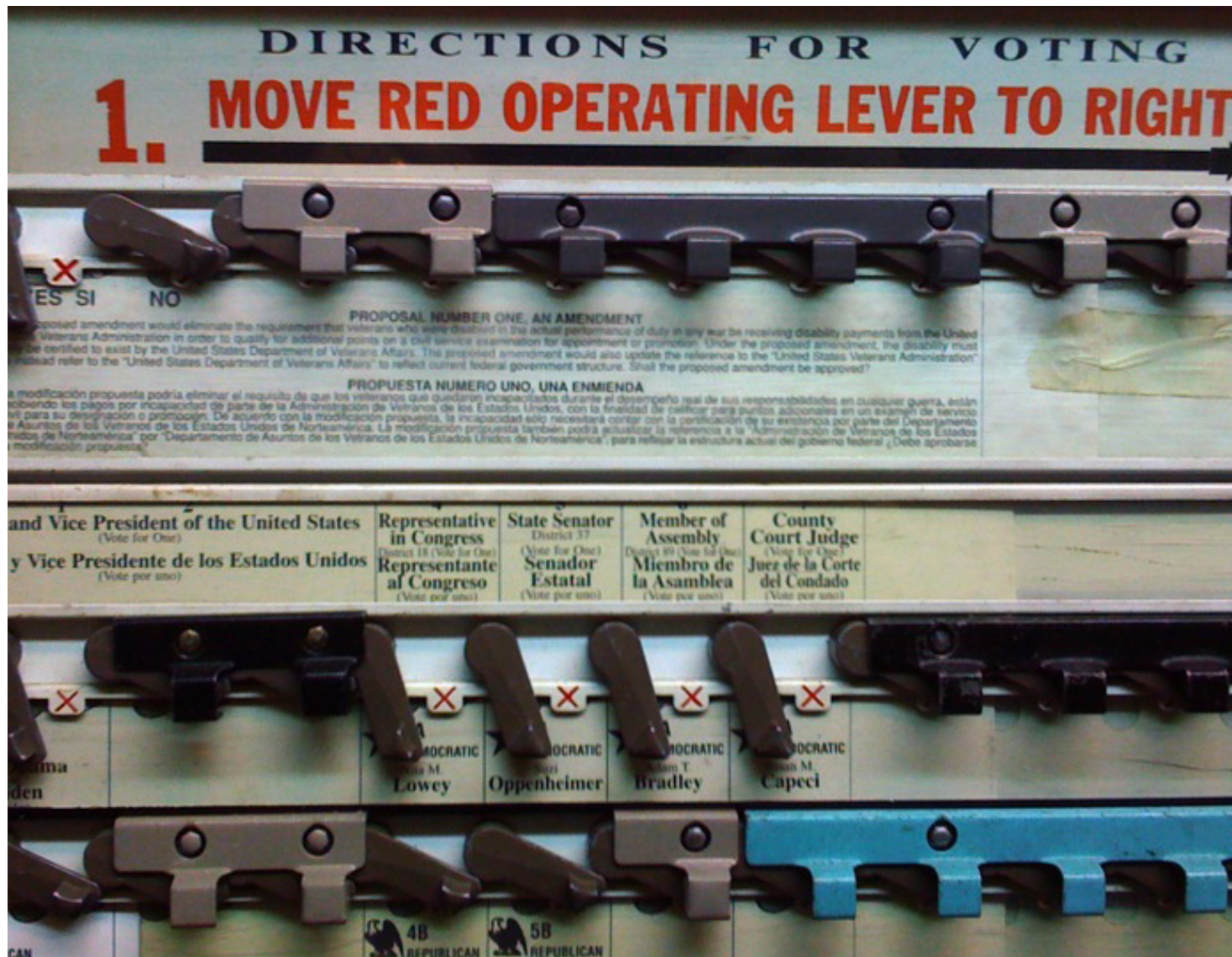


PART SIX

THE HELP AMERICA VOTE ACT SUBSIDIZED FRAUD-PRONE TOUCHSCREEN VOTING SYSTEMS



Proposed in the wake of Florida 2000, the Help America Vote Act was spun as a means to improve U.S. elections by replacing old technologies like lever voting (shown above). In reality, HAVA was a corporate subsidy rammed through by corrupt partisans associated with the Jack Abramoff scandal. HAVA used a pretense of voting rights for the disabled to push expensive, riggable touchscreen voting. HAVA's most corrosive effect on election integrity was elimination of auditable paper ballots for millions of Americans. PHOTO: [John C. Abell](#) (CC).

Why the denial? There are at least 3.9 billion good reasons. In 2002, George W. Bush signed the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), offering states \$3.9 billion in subsidies to modernize their election administration and equipment, purportedly in response to Florida's hanging-chad fiasco of 2000. HAVA mandated that every polling place provide at least one voting system that allowed disabled people to vote with the same "privacy and independence" accorded to nondisabled voters.

Thanks to confusing language in HAVA itself, and even a misleading report issued by the Congressional Research Service, one might easily assume that the mandate called for the purchase of DRE [direct recording electronic] machines. In this way, the blind and visually impaired were unwittingly used as pawns to advance the agenda of the voting-machine industry.

One election supervisor claims that Diebold went so far as to send him threatening letters after he sought out less expensive alternatives to service the disabled, even when these machines were compatible with Diebold's systems.

This was not the only deception surrounding the rollout of these electoral Trojan horses. In a 2007 Dan Rather exposé, "The Trouble with Touch Screens," seven whistleblowers at Sequoia charged that company executives had forced them to use inferior paper stock for ballots during the 2000 election. What's more, said the whistleblowers, they had been instructed to misalign the chads on punch cards destined for the Democratic stronghold of Palm Beach County.

"My own personal opinion was the touchscreen-voting system wasn't getting off the ground like they would hope," said Greg Smith, a thirty-two-year Sequoia employee. "So, I feel like they deliberately did all this to have problems with the paper ballots."



Such blockbuster allegations are perhaps unsurprising given the group of Beltway insiders who helped to pass HAVA. One central player was former Republican representative Bob Ney of Ohio, sentenced in 2006 to thirty months in prison for crimes connected with disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff—whose firm was paid at least \$275,000 by Diebold.

HAVA's impact has been huge, accelerating a deterioration of our electoral system that most Americans have yet to recognize, let alone understand. We are literally losing our ballot—the key physical proof of our power as citizens.

Even a former major elections official has heaped scorn upon HAVA's mission. DeForest Soaries was appointed by George W. Bush to head the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), which HAVA created to oversee security standards for new voting devices. Soaries stepped down in 2005, calling his office a "charade" and claiming that he had been deceived by both the White House and Congress. Washington politicians, Soaries declared in a 2006 radio interview, have apparently concluded that our voting system can't be all that bad—after all, it got them elected.

"But there's an erosion of voting rights implicit in our inability to trust the technology that we use," he added. "And if we were another country being analyzed by America, we would conclude that this country is ripe for stealing elections and for fraud."

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There's an erosion of voting rights implicit in our inability to trust the technology that we use. This country is ripe for stealing elections.

— DeForest Soaries, EAC