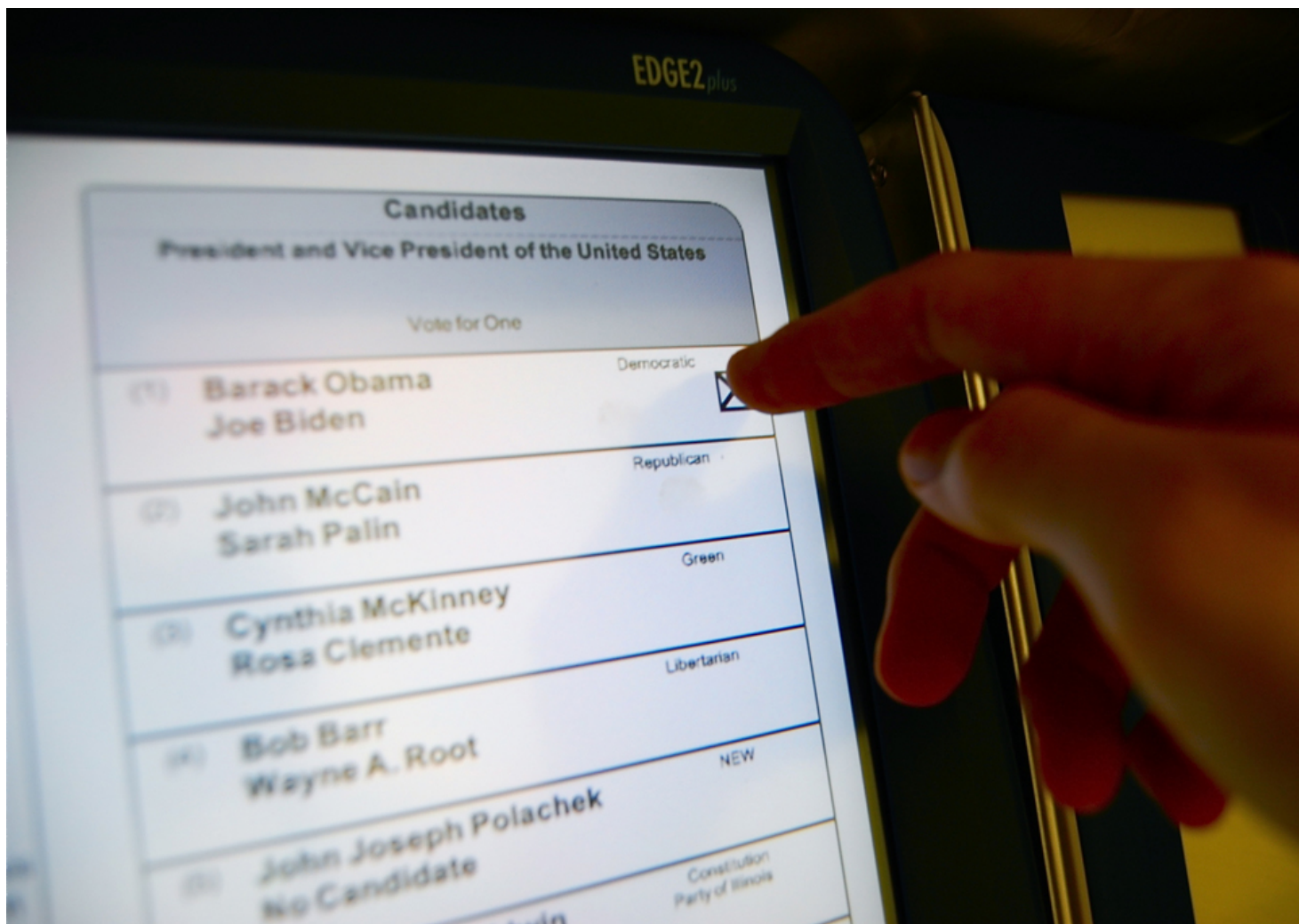


PART SEVEN

ELECTION DAY IS DOMINATED BY A HANDFUL OF SECRETIVE, PARTISAN CORPORATIONS WITH INTERLOCKING OWNERSHIP



Mergers and acquisitions have centralized control of the voting-machine industry since the 1990s, with top executives circulating between the handful of companies that remain. Two brothers in particular, Bob and Todd Urosevich, have led several of the firms. Only antitrust intervention by the Department of Justice has prevented further consolidation. PHOTO: [Eric Allix Rogers](#) (CC).

The sheer unreliability of this new technology is only half the problem. The other half is a series of mergers and acquisitions that have further centralized the voting-machine industry over the past decade or so. Election Day is now dominated by a handful of secretive corporations with interlocking ownership, strong partisan ties to the far right, and executives who revolve among them like beans in a shell game.

Bob and Todd Urosevich are hardly household names. Yet the two brothers have succeeded in monopolizing American election technology for decades through a pair of supposedly competing corporations: the Ohio-based Diebold and the Nebraska-based ES&S. The latter was founded by the Urosevich brothers in 1979 and is headquartered in Omaha, where it has an Ayn Rand–flavored corporate address on John Galt Boulevard. It is also, let us recall, the same company that may have won Chuck Hagel his Senate seat.

Diebold became the most infamous name in the industry in 2003, when its CEO, Walden O’Dell, a top fundraiser for George W. Bush, made a jaw-dropping public promise to “deliver” Ohio’s electoral votes to Bush. The following year, California banned Diebold’s touchscreen system, and Secretary of State Kevin Shelley blasted the company as “fraudulent,” “despicable,” and “deceitful.” O’Dell stepped down in 2005, right before the filing of a class-action suit that accused Diebold of fraud, insider trading, and slipshod quality control.



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Concerned about its tarnished brand, the company removed its label from the front of voting machines. Then Diebold went one step further and changed the name of its voting-machine division to Premier Election Solutions.

In 2009, Diebold, which makes ATMs and other security systems, got out of the elections business altogether, selling Premier to ES&S. Here was a windfall for the Urosevich brothers in more than one sense: Bob had decamped to Diebold in 2002, when the company bought Global Election Systems, where he then served as president. Todd, meanwhile, remained at ES&S. This cozy arrangement was disrupted by a Justice Department antitrust intervention, which forced ES&S to split ownership of Premier with Dominion, the next big name in election technology. A month later, the deck was shuffled once again with Dominion’s purchase of Sequoia.[1]

Between them, Dominion and ES&S now count the majority of American ballots. There are, of course, newer technologies in development, including Web-based voting. This latest innovation is being peddled by the Spanish-owned Scytl, which named Bob Urosevich managing director of its Americas division in 2006.

[1] At the time of the purchase, Dominion absorbed some key staffers from Sequoia, among them Edwin B. Smith, who now serves as Dominion’s vice president of certification and compliance. In 2008, Smith threatened legal action against two computer scientists hired by an association of New Jersey election clerks to examine malfunctioning Sequoia touchscreen machines. The following year, in a farcical conflict of interest, he was appointed to the EAC’s Technical Guidelines Development Committee, which helps determine which specific voting machines should be certified for use.