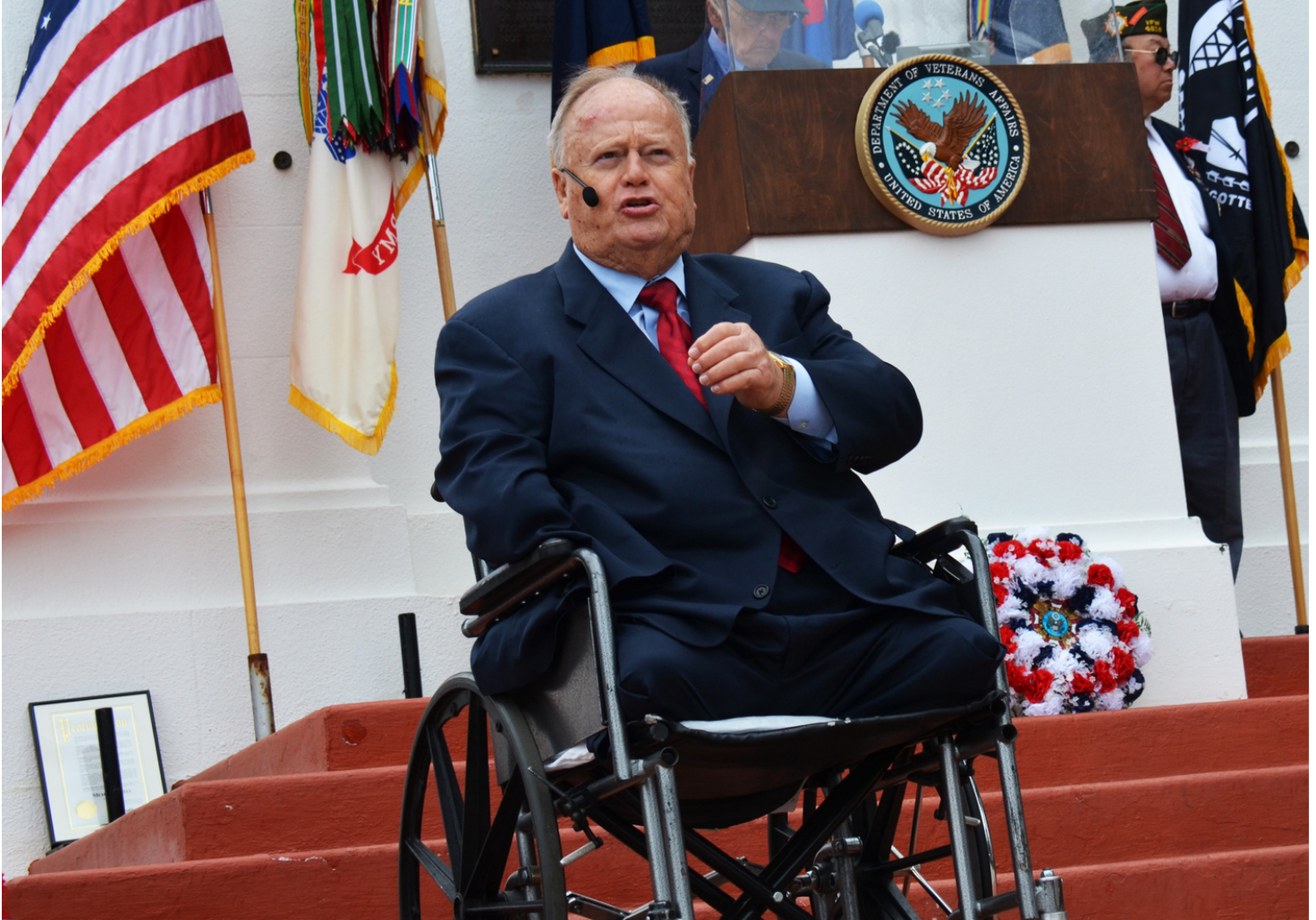


PART NINE

WAS MAX CLELAND SABOTAGED BY ILLEGAL SOFTWARE?



Former U.S. Senator Max Cleland lost a very surprising election to a challenger favored by the Karl Rove White House. The 2002 election in Georgia was one of the first fully privatized elections in America. Diebold was given broad control over election administration as it deployed fraud-prone touchscreen voting machines across the state without an auditable paper trail. The president of Diebold's election division flew in from Texas to personally deliver illegal software changes that were concealed from Georgia officials.

PHOTO: [Steve Rhodes](#) (CC).

Since the American Revolution, election fraud has been attempted by every major political party, with frequent intraparty allegations, such as the claim of Ron Paul delegates that the rules were rigged against them at this year's Republican National Convention.

To say that Democrats haven't committed their fair share of what were once quaintly called "shenanigans" would be disingenuous. Huey Long was a Democrat, as was virtually every candidate ever floated by Tammany Hall, not to mention Lyndon Johnson—whose election to the U.S. Senate in 1948, according to Robert Caro's *Means of Ascent*, relied on flagrant vote tampering. Still, the main beneficiary of recent trends in election stealing seems to be the American right.

This is no accident. As the twenty-first century unfolds, American politics continues to veer precipitously to the right, even as the demographic base for such a shift—older white conservative males—keeps shrinking.

The engine of this seismic movement is a strategic alliance of corporate interests promoted by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. empire and orchestrated by Karl Rove and the Koch-funded American Legislative Exchange Council. And meanwhile, the American right has in recent years been empowered by a slew of upset victories that range from unexpected to implausible, and that have frequently been accompanied by technical failures and anomalies, which are swept under the rug as rapidly as possible.

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In 2002, the GOP regained control of the Senate with such victories. In Georgia, for example, Diebold's voting machines reported the defeat of Democratic senator Max Cleland. Early polls had given the highly popular Cleland a solid lead over his Republican opponent, Saxby Chambliss, a favorite of the Christian right, the NRA, and George W. Bush (who made several campaign appearances on his behalf). As Election Day drew near, the contest narrowed.

Chambliss, who had avoided military service, ran attack ads denouncing Cleland—a Silver Star recipient who lost three limbs in Vietnam—as a traitor for voting against the creation of the Department of Homeland Security. Two days before the election, a Zogby poll gave Chambliss a one-point lead among likely voters, while the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported that Cleland maintained a three-point advantage with the same group.

Cleland lost by seven points. In his 2009 autobiography, he accused computerized voting machines of being “ripe for fraud.” Patched for fraud might have been more apt. In the month leading up to the election, Diebold employees, led by Bob Urosevich, applied a mysterious, uncertified software patch to 5,000 voting machines that Georgia had purchased in May.

“We were told that it was intended to fix the clock in the system, which it didn't do,” Diebold consultant and whistleblower Chris Hood recounted in a 2006 *Rolling Stone* article. “The curious thing is the very swift, covert way this was done. . . . It was an unauthorized patch, and they were trying to keep it secret from the state. . . . We were told not to talk to county personnel about it. I received instructions directly from [Bob] Urosevich. It was very unusual that a president of the company would give an order like that and be involved at that level.”