

forward in unprecedented numbers,” Brown said in her letter.

An investigation by reporters for the *Palm Beach Post*, shows a similar pattern in Palm Beach County, where the now infamous “butterfly ballot” was used. In a Nov. 18 article entitled “Glades Blacks’ Ballots Tossed More Than Average,” authors William Cooper, Jr. and Alexandra Clifton said that up to 23% of the ballots in black precincts in the county were tossed out, because the voter either did not vote for President or punched more than one hole in the Presidential race.

This extraordinarily high percentage of rejected ballots occurred in 11 predominantly black precincts in Belle Glade, Pahokee, and South Bay, which are the poorer areas of a county known more generally as a resort and retirement area. Belle Glade became infamous in the 1980s, when it was found to have a high rate of AIDS and tuberculosis, because of its Africa-style poverty and lack of sanitation and other economic infrastructure.

Cooper and Clifton reported that because of language problems, lack of familiarity with voting, and “fear of asking for another ballot,” 639 voters had their ballots eliminated out of 2,819 votes cast in the Glades area. This level, 23%, was extremely high; but the overall rate for all the black precincts in Palm Beach County was 16%—more than double the county-wide rate of 7%. There were 462,657 ballots cast in the county—so more than 30,000 ballots may have been eliminated there.

One of the problems cited was that Haitian voters who speak Creole, had no language assistance; one poll worker, Shirley Morris, reported that the poll workers tried to reach the Supervisor of Elections about the language problem, but were unable to get through because the lines were busy.

A lawsuit has already been filed about these types of irregularities in Palm Beach. An *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) brief filed by the American Civil Liberties Union includes reports that Palm Beach poll workers “said they were under strict instructions to turn away people asking for voting assistance,” and that a poll worker in Boynton Beach admitted turning people away, saying, “People were coming up to me . . . and I had to follow the directive—‘Don’t help anyone. Don’t talk to anyone.’” The brief also “suggests” that “a substantial number of voters in Palm Beach County who discovered their error before actually casting their vote, were refused replacement ballots.”

GOP Claims Against the Dems

The corruption of the vote clearly tainted both parties. Besides the wholesale disqualification of overseas absentee ballots in Florida, the most specific allegations made so far by the Republican Party involve Wisconsin. According to the Associated Press, the Wisconsin GOP has filed hundreds of vote fraud complaints with the Milwaukee County District Attorney’s office, which is now investigating the allegations. The Republicans are charging, reports AP, that “dozens of

students voted more than once, and Democrats offered cigarettes to homeless people to vote.” Wisconsin has same-day registration right at the polls, and the voting was delayed for hours as poll workers scrambled to register the many students voting for the first time.

In the face of widespread fraud in the recent election, the American people have the opportunity, and the obligation, to use the means which the U.S. Constitution provides, to examine the causes for this disaster, and to fashion an appropriate remedy.

Corruption Wins in Eighteen States

by Anita Gallagher

Various “convenience” voting procedures adopted in recent years in the United States, including liberalized use of absentee ballots, registration at state motor vehicle departments, and early voting—not to mention bad ballot design, punch-cards, and media “early winner” projections—have opened the way for interested parties to corrupt and manipulate elections, amidst procedures sloppy and inconsistent enough to embarrass any banana republic.

“Convenience” measures have been adopted in the last eight years across the United States, supposedly to remedy declining voter turnout at all levels of U.S. elections. Yet, the turnout of age-eligible voters in U.S. Presidential elections has continued to decline since 1960, and has remained at about 50% in the 1996 and 2000 elections. While it is true that virtually everyone older than 18 in the United States works long hours, and faces poor transit, crowded roads, and other impediments to getting to the polling place, the fact is that the whole gamut of convenience measures, to put them in the best possible light, have only served to slow the drop in voter turnout.

Why? Convenience measures cannot remedy the fact that voting is a cognitive act based on ideas; specifically, the idea of the common good, which must be communicated by the candidate to the population to energize a vote. Absent that factor, such measures as mass mail-in “absentee” balloting become like the creations of a sorcerer’s apprentice. They are out-of-control capabilities ripe for manipulation by interested parties in a climate of general disgust and public contempt for candidates.

Absentee Ballots

If you have a picture of Americans marching out to make a national decision on Election Day to choose who will govern, that is about as outdated as the horse and buggy. Consider:

- About one year ago, Oregon decided by referendum to mail ballots to all voters, which is done in mid-October. Thus, its elections are effectively 100% conducted by absentee ballot, and “election day” is three weeks long. If a candidate dies, or drops out, just before the election (there are recent examples of both), those who vote early by mail may waste their vote.

- In Washington State, approximately 55% of the Presidential voting was done by absentee ballot—some 1.3-1.5 million votes. These ballots are required to be postmarked by Election Day, but the count is not certified until November 22, to allow all mailed ballots to arrive. On November 20, the Secretary of State’s office told *EIR* that *up to 50,000 more absentee ballots could still come in, and be counted*. Meanwhile, the outcome of a U.S. Senate race, as well as the question of which party will control the state legislature’s lower chamber, remain undecided.

- In Florida, where the difference between Al Gore and George Bush is only a few hundred votes, the outcome may hinge on overseas absentee ballots, which did not have to arrive until November 17. While the overseas ballots counted have broken 2-to-1 for Bush, more than 1,500 of the 4,000-plus overseas ballots—mostly military—were disqualified for lack of either a signature, a witness signature, a witness address, or a postmark. Meanwhile, it has become a political judgment call whether to require a postmark on the overseas military ballots. Florida law technically requires it, but after more than one-third of these ballots were disqualified, various Democrats were stung by criticism that they were not allowing those serving the nation to vote. Florida’s Democratic Attorney General has said that military ballots should be counted without a postmark, but no one knows if the 1,500 thrown out at the county level can be reconsidered.

- In California, the state with the largest number of voters, 28% of the voting was by absentee ballot—approximately 3 million votes. As of November 21, two weeks after Election Day, the California Secretary of State’s office reported that 195,059 absentee ballots were still to be opened and counted.

Absentee voting is increasing in all states, though many of the traditional “swing” states in Presidential elections—such as Florida, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and New York—do not even keep track of statewide absentee totals.

Dean Plotnick, of the private consulting firm Election Data Services in Washington, D.C., told *EIR* that the biggest push for absentee voting comes from the parties, which aggressively mail out request forms for absentee ballots to all registered party members. The party members, in turn, are to complete these unsolicited applications and send them on to the local election boards, which then mail them absentee ballots. Plotnick views the California Republican Party as the pioneer of this voter-turnout technique. Absentee ballots won a California gubernatorial race for GOP candidate Pete Wilson—who was the loser when the polls closed. Though Democrats also use this technique for voter turnout, it is generally

believed to favor Republicans, whose more affluent constituency is presumed to handle paperwork more reliably.

In fact, the U.S. Department of Justice says that states should allow 45 days total out-and-back mail transit time for absentee ballots—a standard some states cannot meet because of late fall primaries. Some states, such as Florida, have been sued to allow more time (the reason Florida allows an extra 10 days for overseas ballots to arrive), while other states have not.

In Texas, a voter may vote in person in designated county buildings or community centers during the two weeks before an election, besides other convenience procedures.

Perhaps 25% of those who voted in the Presidential election cast their ballots in places other than the traditional voting booth, and at times other than Election Day. This, estimates Curtis Gans, director of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, is more than twice the number who used alternative voting procedures 20 years ago, the *Wall Street Journal* reported on November 7.

Motor Voter Registration

In Florida, more than 2.8 million voters have registered to vote through driver’s license offices since the program began in 1995. In heavily contested Miami-Dade County, just to take one example, the program averaged 7-8,000 registrations a month, but these soared to over 35,000 a month in September and October 2000. But, according to the November 19 *Miami Herald*, 175 Miami-Dade residents per day called the county election board to ask why they had not received their voter identification cards, after registering at the motor vehicles office. Some of their names appeared on the computer list of registered voters, but an untallied number of people who had not received cards, and whose names were not on the list, were not allowed to vote.

Election officials blame the error on the logistics of getting the applications from the motor vehicles offices to the election offices. Some never arrive, because they are “lost in the mail,” according to the *Miami Herald*. Some are not processed, simply because it is another task imposed on already-overworked driver’s license clerks, who are focussed on driver’s license procedures. Thousands of people who claim they registered at motor vehicle offices were turned away in New York, Illinois, and Maryland, as well as in closely contested Florida, the paper reported.

‘Chad’ Stole the Vote

The manual recounts proceeding, as of this writing, in Florida, have been necessitated in part because of the use of punchcard voting, which was introduced in order to let computers, rather than precinct election officials, count the vote. Ballot access expert Richard Wenger of California estimates that punchcard voting is used in 25% of all U.S. polling places. With punchcard voting, a stylus is used to punch a hole. Sometimes the paper dot punched out, called a “chad,”