



## THE ISSUES

### The Privatization of Our Election Process

*"Voters should not have to rely on any private company for the security and the fundamental fairness of their election system ....*

*The further you go into privatizing this activity of running elections, the more you lose control over the very core of our democracy."*

Lowell Finley  
Deputy Secretary of State, California

Our election process is largely under the control of a few private companies that use secret software, unsecured hardware, and vote counting and recording methods that do not allow for accurate audits or recounts. The number of electronic voting machines has dramatically increased during the past decade. The equipment is typically sold with stipulations that the hardware and software components cannot be examined before or after elections by election officials or citizens to ensure that votes are being counted and recorded accurately.

Part of the problem lies with the complexity of the technology itself. Few election officials are capable of programming and maintaining the equipment without outside assistance. This puts election officials in the position of relying on the private companies for technical assistance. It is difficult to find other instances where public officials have so readily surrendered their power and control over vital functions of government than we have seen with the adoption of electronic voting systems.

*John Gideon is co-director of the nonprofit, VotersUnite.org and has written extensively about electronic voting and privatization. His article here is titled "Corporate Control of the Election Process."*

[http://www.votetrustusa.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=86&Itemid=84](http://www.votetrustusa.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=86&Itemid=84)

*Ellen Thiesen, co-director with Gideon of VotersUnite.org and an computer software specialist, gave this speech to the Washington Federation of Democratic Women, where she spoke about the privatization of our elections:*

<http://www.votersunite.org/info/PrivatizationOfElections.pdf>

