

# HOW TO CONDUCT PARALLEL ELECTIONS

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In an August 2006 Zogby poll, U.S. citizens nearly unanimously agreed they want transparency in the election process. An open, transparent election process, guided by citizen oversight, provides a basis for confidence in reported election results. Hand-counting paper ballots, rather than electrons, is the most secure, most accurate, and least expensive of all voting systems. Let's do it. [rady.j30@gmail.com](mailto:rady.j30@gmail.com)

# Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Obtain Advance Voter Info	5
Costs and Items Needed	5
Roster Book Detail	5
Voter Pledge	6
Ballot Design	6
PE Workers	7
Closing the Polls	8
Hand Count Paper Ballots	8
Follow-Up: Canvassing	8
Final Report	8
Talking Points	9
Donate to Defray PE Costs <a href="http://www.FreePress.org">www.FreePress.org</a>	9
Resources	10
Further Reading	10



Our primary goal is to ascertain how a precinct voted in the official election  
And to celebrate democracy

# INTRODUCTION

Democracy in the U.S. is under siege. Note the bipartisan passage of the USA “PATRIOT” Act, bipartisan support of torture, bipartisan repeal of bankruptcy protection for individuals, bipartisan support of a minimum wage that is below poverty – thus legalizing slavery in the U.S. Note that corporate control of US elections is maintained by judicial support throughout the country.

Note that corporate media fails to fully report the lack of security and transparency inherent in electronic voting systems.

“Democide” is fully under way.

To assert our inalienable right to be self-governed, democracy advocates around the globe agree to nonviolently evolve today’s culture. One peaceful way to implement democracy is to create parallel institutions, which stand to fill the power vacuum created by public rejection of corrupt institutions. The next generation can then continue to build on and perfect these parallel institutions, as more and more citizens realize we’ve lost democracy in the U.S.

Free and fair elections constitute the critical issue – all other rights derive from this one. The first step to implement democracy is for citizens to conduct elections – not politicians, technocrats or corporations. The next step is that the process be completely transparent, unlike what exists today. Hand-counting paper ballots, at the precinct, before all who wish to observe allows everyone to observe the vote count, contrasted with the vote count that occurs inside the electronic “black box.”

Since March 2005, citizens in nine states have begun developing and implementing free and fair elections. We do this by holding Parallel Elections (PE). This manual was created, and is being revised with each PE experience, to help others run PEs in Ohio, and around the nation.

**Today, all voting is in peril, with the use of computers to record or tabulate the vote:**

- There are 120 ways to hack the vote on a computer; there are 6 ways to hack paper ballots;
- Courts across the country, in case after case, support the partisan and corporate administration of elections and block citizen efforts to oversee elections and conduct meaningful recounts;
- In Ohio, the Chief Election Officer is running for Governor, invoking “Administrative Rules” that suppress the vote and disenfranchise whole groups of people in this state.

See an abbreviated resource list at the back of this document for further reading.

**The antidote to fraudulent elections is a citizen run Parallel Election and poll monitoring.**

Parallel elections were initially conceived in the early 1990s as part of an overall peaceful resistance plan that was partly developed by U.S. think tanks – the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute.



Otpor (“resistance”), the group that overthrew Serbia’s Milosevic, received millions of dollars in funding from the U.S. government via the National Endowment for Democracy and the U.S. Agency for International Development. U.S. billionaire George Soros is reportedly a main donor to these causes.

Other governments and agencies financially and strategically assisted these peaceful efforts, including the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict and the Albert Einstein Institution.

These efforts have been employed in several nations including Burma, Belarus, Georgia and the Ukraine. Such efforts can be successfully implemented in the U.S., as well.

**Parallel Elections provide:**

- Conclusive, indisputable results by a hand count of paper ballots
- Openness and transparency – anyone can observe the election process
- Non-partisan representation to protect against fraud
- Chain of custody of the ballot box and ballots throughout the process
- A frame on which the modern democracy movement can be sustained
- Peace of mind that the will of your neighbors is accurately known and reported

**Parallel Elections are run:**

- By volunteers who donate a shift of time on Election Day
- At a minimal cost – about \$100 per precinct
- 100 feet outside an official polling site
- Rain or Shine under a tent
- The way elections ought to be run.

The material in this manual was prepared from personal experience and these sources:

- Judy Alter’s DVD entitled “Parallel Elections: How to Do Them”; See [www.study-california-ballots.org](http://www.study-california-ballots.org)
- Ellen Brodsky’s, “First ‘Grass Roots’ Parallel Election Project,” a paper written on the PE held in Coconut Grove, FL on March 8, 2005; and
- Reports from Ohio’s PE organizers Jo Anne Karasek and Marj Creech who were joined by others in holding Ohio’s first Parallel Election on August 2, 2005.
- Discussions with Lynn Landes, Judy Alter and other PE advocates.

Feedback is welcome, as well as PE reports from any group who conducts them.

Elections belong to the people. All it takes is about 10 people per precinct, in every precinct, for us to achieve an accurate vote count. Let’s do this. Let’s find out how our neighbors really voted.

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October 2, 2006

## OBTAIN ADVANCE VOTER INFO

Submit a public records request for your county's "Voter File" which gives the name and address of every registered voter in your county. The Franklin County, Ohio Voter File contains the voter's name, address, date of birth, precinct designation and political party. This information will be useful in auditing the official results and in following up with voters if a post-election canvass is indicated.

### ITEMS NEEDED (from \$75 to \$200 cost per precinct):



1. Two or three shifts of 3-5 people at the polling site and the count
2. Canopy or Tent (for inclement weather), umbrellas
3. Table & Chairs for PE workers
4. Food, water and beverages for the PE workers
5. Clipboards & pens (for voters to use when voting)
6. Lanterns or some other light source
7. Clear (see-thru) ballot box, slotted at the top, and able to be padlocked; two padlocks are better, with the keys given to two different persons, not in the same political party or household.
8. Use a chain tightly fitted (like a package string) around the box, or tape seal that will show if the seal has been broken.
9. Large Sign affixed to the table or side of tent: "**Citizen-Run Parallel Election**"
10. Roster Book: stitch-bound notebook with lined pages (see details below)
11. Notepad for voters to report election irregularities (see details below)
12. Cell phone for contact with region or state wide PE coordinator
13. Pre-printed ballots that look NOTHING like the official ballots but which contain the date, precinct, all the races, and the voter pledge
14. Voter Pledge displayed prominently (e.g., on an 8x10 standup frame, etc.)
15. Parallel Election information sheets, election-integrity flyers, etc.
16. Volunteer Sign-Up sheets for those citizens wishing to conduct a Parallel Election at some future time.

**SET-UP** at least 100 feet from the polling site. Introduce yourself to the precinct judge and explain what you're doing. (See Talking Points on page 9.)

### ROSTER BOOK (only use ONE side of each page)

1. Use a stitch-bound book, preferably with its pages pre-numbered so that it will be obvious if any pages have been removed. If not pre-numbered, go thru and number each sheet (one side only) in ink.
2. On the third sheet, which constitutes the beginning pages where voters sign, begin numbering the lines sequentially, to the last page of the book. (Do not start numbering at the top of each new sheet.)
3. Label the outside of the book with the county, state and date of election, and most importantly, precinct number and city. See example below:

**Lucas County, Ohio  
Citizen-Run Parallel Election  
November 8, 2005  
Precinct: Toledo 1E**

4. On the first page, include an affirmation for PE workers to sign before a Notary Public. Below is suggested wording:

**“The undersigned Parallel Election workers, who are Ohio citizens, do solemnly swear or affirm that they have impartially conducted a Parallel Election, instructing voters, who volunteered to participate, on the mechanics of voting in this system, without in any way trying to influence their vote, except to explain that the Parallel Election system asks voters to vote exactly in the manner they voted in the official election.”**

Allow lines for PE workers to print and sign their names. Follow this with a notarial paragraph:

**SWORN TO AND SUBSCRIBED** before me, a Notary Public in and for the State of Ohio, this \_\_\_\_ day of November, 2006.

My commission expires \_\_\_\_\_.

5. On the next page, print the **VOTER PLEDGE**, which the voter must read:

**“I am voluntarily participating in this citizen-run Parallel Election.\* I swear or affirm that I am casting the same ballot choices on the Parallel Election ballot as I cast in the (Regular or Special) election of \_\_\_\_\_ County, (State) on the official ballot on Tuesday, November 7, 2006.**

**\*I am aware that this Parallel Election ballot is not an official ballot, but will be used to check the accuracy of the official results. The official ballots and vote tallies are recorded on \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g. Diebold TSx DRE optical scanner voting machines) which are operated with trade-secret (“proprietary”) software not disclosed to the public, not even to public elections officials.”**

The above Voter Pledge should also be posted in large type on the PE table, perhaps using a standup 8x10” frame.

6. Voters must **FIRST** sign the Roster Book, **THEN** vote. If the voter refuses to sign, but wants to vote, it is suggested that the PE worker notes in the book **“refused to sign.”**

## **BALLOT DESIGN**

Parallel election ballots **MUST differ in appearance** from official ballots, but they must contain all the same information such as the precinct info, date, and contests.

The largest expense of a PE project is the cost of printing the ballots. The July 2005 Parallel Election held in San Diego cost over \$750 and covered 11 precincts (about \$68 per precinct).

Maintain chain of custody with the parallel ballots - ballots must be under continual supervision for the sake of credibility. Use at least two people from more than one political party.

## INFORMATIONAL HAND-OUTS

Hand out informational material AFTER voters have finished voting. If you are collecting names of future volunteers, also do this after they have finished voting.

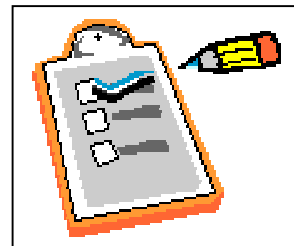
## THE FIRST PARALLEL VOTER

Have the first parallel voter witness that the voting box is empty. Seal the box and let the voter drop his or her ballot into it. The voter can then sign a statement to this effect:

**I, \_\_\_\_\_, witnessed that the Parallel Election box was empty, then sealed, after which I dropped my vote into the box.**

## PARALLEL ELECTION WORKERS

**PE Supervisor** – assists with any unforeseen issues that may arise, and can assist with greeting and observing; keeps in contact with PE coordinator, media, police and/or precinct officials. Obtains copies of precinct reports (of who voted) posted at 11 am, 4 pm and also obtains the tallied result total posted at the close of polls. Requests absentee & provisional vote totals.



**Greeters** – catch the attention of voters leaving the polling place and invite them to vote in the citizen-run parallel election. Greeters should have talking points memorized (see page 9 for full list of talking points).

Greeters hand voters the parallel ballot (on a clipboard) and ask them to cast their ballot exactly as they did in the official election. Voters are asked to choose whether to vote secretly or openly – in which case they would sign their ballot before depositing it into the parallel ballot box.

**Roster Book Clerk** – explains the sign-in process to voters; has them read the Voter Pledge; makes sure the voter prints his or her name and address and signs on the correct line in the Roster Book.



**Observer** – makes sure the voter correctly deposits the completed ballot; handles the Reports of Irregularities, protects the envelope containing those reports. This person may later swear by affidavit as to the receipt of such reports from voters.

**Videographer** – Video the vote! We seek 1000 volunteers for the November 2006 election to submit video footage which will be shared among three independent film makers.

Two of the above workers must be from different political parties, and those two retain custody of ballots during the parallel election, during transport to a public facility where the count will be held, and at the public facility while the count is held.

## CLOSING THE POLLS

After the polls are closed, the PE Supervisor obtains the official results, which should be posted at the precinct. ***Be sure to ask for the results of absentee and provisional votes***, as these may not be on the newly printed precinct results.

## HAND COUNT PAPER BALLOTS

Interested observers are invited to follow the parallel ballot box to an indoor public location where the ballot box will be opened, and the ballots removed and counted. At least two people from different political parties must observe the ballots at all times (being able to swear to the chain of custody).

The names provided in the Roster Book by parallel voters are compared to the official Voter File (obtained in advance from the County Board of Elections or the Secretary of State's office), to ascertain that parallel voters are legally registered voters in that precinct.

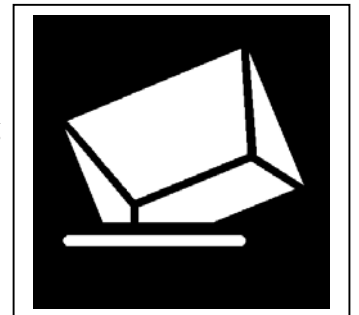
An audit is performed comparing the number of ballots with the number of voters in the Roster Book. Discrepancies should be resolved before counting actually begins.

Experts advise that the “**Sort and Stack**” method of counting is the simplest and most accurate counting method to use. Ballots are sorted by candidate selected, one race or issue at a time. Each candidate's stack contains piles of 10; and each pile of ten faces a different direction so that the piles of 10 are obvious.

The process is observed for accuracy by those not sorting the ballots.

Once the stacks are sorted into piles of ten for each candidate or issue, counting is achieved by counting in tens (the number of ballots per pile in a stack).

Two different people tally the vote results per candidate, noting any undervotes (no candidate selected) and overvotes (more than one candidate selected for a given race). The tally is observed by others.



The process is repeated for each race or issue, until all ballots are fully counted.

Ohio has been fortunate to have PhDs assist in counting the vote, lending scientific credibility to the process.

## FOLLOW-UP CANVASSING

You may want to obtain the votes of those who did not participate in the PE that day, or you may want to obtain the vote of absentee voters, or you may want to discuss election day problems that voters reported at the PE booth. This is when the Voter File (or “walking list”) that you obtained in advance from your County Board of Elections will come in handy. All registered voters, their address and political affiliation will be noted on the BOE-prepared Voter File.

Some PE organizers have walked the precinct after Election Day to ascertain the vote of those who didn't participate in the parallel election.



## **FINAL REPORT** (We're being the media here, and submitting reports nationally.)

Prepare a final report showing an exact breakdown of all votes, by party, by precinct for each race polled. Include your methodology (how the PE was conducted) with as much detail as possible. Share your report with PE organizers, and post to the web. In Ohio, send reports to Rady Ananda at [rady.j30@gmail.com](mailto:rady.j30@gmail.com) and to Marj Creech at [risenregan@earthlink.net](mailto:risenregan@earthlink.net). Include your contact info for follow-up communication.

All voting problems reported will be submitted to [ReportOhio@WeCount2006.org](mailto:ReportOhio@WeCount2006.org)

All reports will be submitted to various election integrity websites and to public officials, when and if appropriate. Ohio's PE reports will be posted at [www.FreePress.org](http://www.FreePress.org) and [www.GuvWurld.org](http://www.GuvWurld.org).

## **TALKING POINTS**

This is a citizen-run parallel election to check the accuracy of the machines.

Our primary goal is to ascertain how each precinct voted in the official election.

This is a poll in which we want ALL voters to participate. In this type of poll, your vote is secret.

Accurately counting the vote ensures democracy; double-checking that count ensures accuracy.

A hand-count of paper ballots provides a valid statistical sample that may detect discrepancies between the official reported results and how citizens themselves report how they voted. Parallel Election ballots may also provide legal evidence for a court challenge.

We can't count electrons, but we can count paper ballots. No public official can demonstrate that our votes are counted as cast when they are counted with secret software.

### **Parallel Elections provide:**

- Conclusive, indisputable results by a hand count of paper ballots,
- Openness and transparency – anyone can observe the election process,
- Non-partisan representation to protect against fraud,
- Chain of custody of the ballot box and ballots throughout the process,
- A frame on which the modern democracy movement can be sustained,
- Peace of mind that the will of your neighbors is accurately known and reported.

**PLEASE DONATE** to help defray costs of Parallel Elections: [www.FreePress.org](http://www.FreePress.org)

Note that your donation is for PEs.

## RESOURCES (Abbreviated for space considerations only)

<http://www.BlackBoxVoting.org> The gnarly details on hacking a computerized voting system  
<http://www.BradBlog.com> Breaking stories on legal contests to stop election tampering, and more  
<http://www.CASEohio.org> Citizens share info on elections; focused on Ohio  
<http://www.concentric.org> "Stealing America: Vote by Vote" preview run time 70 minutes.  
<http://www.OhioVigilance.org> Citizens share info on elections; focused on Ohio  
<http://www.ElectionFraudNews.com> Election contest documents uploaded for viewing  
<http://election.solarbus.org> Excellent site to find current info and to learn who's doing what  
<http://www.eon3.net> DVDs: "Help America Vote on Paper," 2006; and "Got Democracy?" 2005  
<http://www.FreePress.org> Contesting Ohio elections; DONATE TO PARALLEL ELECTION COSTS  
<http://www.GuvWurld.org> Visionary essays on peaceful evolution, including elections  
<http://www.NoSleepovers.org> San Diego citizens seek to obtain election oversight  
<http://www.StudyCaliforniaBallots.org> More info on how to run a parallel election, California-style  
<http://Votergate.org> Watch the movie  
<http://www.votescam.com> Her father & uncle broke the story on computerized voting – back in 1979!  
<http://www.WeCount2006.org> Report voting problems to [ReportOhio@wecount2006.org](mailto:ReportOhio@wecount2006.org)

## FURTHER READING

**Brennan Center Report on US Elections.** 2006. Denounces the use of electronic voting systems.  
<http://www.brennancenter.org/programs/downloads/Full%20Report.pdf>

**Princeton University.** 2006. Report on the extreme vulnerability to hack of the 33,000 Diebold AccuVote-TS machines that will be used in the U.S. on November 7, 2006. <http://itpolicy.princeton.edu/voting>. Link to Video at <http://itpolicy.princeton.edu/voting/videos.html>

**Michael Collins, Congressional Election Nullified – Nobody Noticed.** August 2006. Follow the absorbing details of how California Registrar of Voters Mikel Haas violated state and federal laws by sending voting machines on sleepovers to poll worker homes, and how the San Diego County Court subverted State rights by allowing uncertified, suspect results to stand. <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL0608/S00316.htm>

**John Conyers, Preserving Democracy: What Went Wrong in Ohio,** Status Report of the House Judiciary Committee Democratic Staff. January 2005. [www.house.gov/judiciary\\_democrats/ohiostatusrept1505.pdf](http://www.house.gov/judiciary_democrats/ohiostatusrept1505.pdf)

**Harry Hursti, Expert Hacks Voting Machines** in Leon County, Florida. Harry Hursti showed in December 2005 that vendors have done little to nothing to upgrade the security of electronic voting technology. Actual technical report can be found at <http://www.blackboxvoting.org/BBVtsxstudy.pdf> and a New York Times explanation is at [http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/12/us/12vote.html?\\_r=3&oref=slogin&pagewanted=print](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/12/us/12vote.html?_r=3&oref=slogin&pagewanted=print)

**Wall Street Journal: Reversing Course on Electronic Voting: Some Former Backers of Technology Seek Return to Paper Ballots, Citing Glitches, Fraud Fears.** May 2006. Former Secretary of State James A. Baker and former President Jimmy Carter, who co-chaired the bipartisan Commission on Federal Election Reform, warned in their 2005 final report of fraud. "Software can be modified maliciously before being installed into individual voting machines. There is no reason to trust insiders in the election industry any more than in other industries." [http://online.wsj.com/public/article\\_print/SB114739688261250925-q5rh2ocioxu6mgjmS6bZPCZL0HY\\_20060610.html](http://online.wsj.com/public/article_print/SB114739688261250925-q5rh2ocioxu6mgjmS6bZPCZL0HY_20060610.html)

**Zogby Poll:** 92% of voters agree that citizens have the right to view and obtain information about how election officials count votes. <http://www.zogby.com/news/ReadNews.dbm?ID=1163>

*"If we don't have the trust of the governed in our society,  
then we don't have the consent of the governed."*

Megan Matson, [www.TheMMOB.org](http://www.TheMMOB.org), February 2005