

Sequoia Voting Systems Responsible for 2000 Presidential Debacle?

KIM ZETTERS ECURITY AUG 15, 2007 1:08 PM

<https://www.wired.com/2007/08/sequoia-voting/>

It's been seven years since pregnant and dangling chads in Florida caused one of the biggest political rifts in U.S. history. Those faulty Florida ballots also directly led to the passage of federal legislation in 2002 that outlawed punch-card voting machines and allocated billions of dollars in federal funds for states to purchase expensive new [...]

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Now new questions are being raised about who was responsible for the faulty punch cards in that election. And according to last night's Dan Rather Reports episode, the fingers point to Sequoia Voting Systems, which not only makes e-voting machines that replaced punch cards but also created the punch cards that failed in Florida.

Rather and his producers spoke with several former workers of Sequoia who revealed that in 2000 the company changed the paper stock it used for punch cards to paper made by Boise Cascade and that they knew before the election that the punch cards that Sequoia was producing would cause problems. In fact, pre-election testing by Sequoia showed that the cards were not punching cleanly and that dangling chads were going to be a likely problem in the election. The original transcript from the Rather program is difficult to read because it lacks punctuation and paragraph breaks, but I've added paragraph breaks here so you can understand more clearly what the workers told Rather. You can also watch the entire Dan Rather report, *The Trouble with Touch Screens*, [here](#). Per the transcript:

Linda Evans recalls the chad testing of ballots manufactured for the 2000 election.

Chads were falling out. Chads were hanging up. We've got a machine that it we call a gang punch, which in a sense punches out all the holes at the same time. You slide the card in there and you pull down the

handle and it punches out all the holes. They weren't punching out. They were hanging up all over the places.

They were aware of that.

Oh, management was aware of it. We told 'em.

Ms. Evans says that management had a simple response to her warnings:

It'll be okay.

But it wasn't okay, according to Evans and her co-workers. They believe that the chad problems at the factory became chad problems in Florida- causing at the very least thousands of undervotes, due to hanging or stuck chads. There were over 10,000 undervotes in Palm Beach County.

According to Rather, more than 50,000 Sequoia punch cards were discarded as invalid because voters appeared to have overvoted, and on 17,000 of the Sequoia cards, voters seemed to have voted for three or more presidential candidates.

As soon as news about the problematic Florida ballots hit the airwaves, Sequoia's workers told Rather they immediately knew where the blame lay, though they never told reporters.

It's the morning after the election in 2000. You turned on the television, you turned on the radio and you saw and heard about the mess in Florida. Tell me what you thought. Let's start over with you. What'd you think?

Oh, man. Somebody blew it bad and I bet it was us. Well, I-- I knew it was us and-- I didn't expect anything less than fiascos. Because you knew you were dealing with bad paper. Because we were dealing with bad paper and old tooling. I get a phone call. And it's-- the first one was from my wife. She goes, "What you guys do?" I go, "What happened?" She goes, "The ballots are bad in Florida. Palm Beach."

So, then, I hang up and then the next person calls me is my boss Jim Johnson and he tells me, "We blew it. The ballots are bad in Florida."

It's all over the news and when you got to the plant in the days after the election, what was the scene there?

It was chaotic. They were moving stuff, hiding stuff, get rid of this.

Hiding stuff?

Yeah, because the news people wanted to come in and talk to people and they wanted to tour the plant.

We were told to get rid of everything, anything that had Florida on it had to disappear

And did it disappear?

Yes. Nothing with any kind of Boise Cascade labels was supposed to be left around.

And that word came from whom?

Brian Lehrman.

Who was?

The plant manager.

We repeatedly invited Sequoia to have Brian Lehrman on camera to answer some of the workers allegations Sequoia declined.

The worker goes on to make an unsubstantiated claim about what he thinks happened in the 2000 election.

My own personal opinion was the touch screen voting system wasn't getting off the ground like that they-- like they would hope. And because they weren't having any problems with paper ballots. So, I feel like they-- deliberately did all this to have problems with the paper ballots so the electronically voting systems would get off the ground -and which it did in a big way.