

Structural Capture: The Theft Nobody Is Talking About

September 29, 2026



When people say an election was stolen, they are describing a single event. A ballot box stuffed. A machine flipped. A count that came out wrong. That is a crime, and it can be investigated, prosecuted, and corrected.

But what if the theft is not one election? What if the theft is the entire election system itself?

The Tool That Belongs to the People

Elections are not the government. Elections are the tool the people use to measure their own will. They are how citizens decide who 'government' is and what power that 'government' has. The government does not own elections. Government is the output of elections. We cannot have the output control the input.

This country was built on the premise that power would always remain in the hands of the people. What has happened instead was a transfer of power, from the people into the hands of

government and private corporations, carried out so skillfully that most citizens did not notice it for decades.

Private corporations also have no business running elections. Elections belong to the citizens, and any Citizens who's job it is to administer them must be accountable to the citizens, not to shareholders or to the state.

The Two Things Citizens Can No Longer Do

And when I say 'Citizens', I'm talking about YOU and I, us.

1. The citizens (we) cannot guarantee that only eligible voters are casting ballots.
2. The citizens (we) cannot guarantee that the count of those ballots is accurate.

Those are the two things elections exist to do, and they are the two things citizens can no longer confirm. A count resting solely on trust rather than verification, is a recipe for disaster. Trust is not a substitute for verification in a system that is supposed to belong to the people.

The Timeline

This did not happen overnight. It happened one degree at a time, over decades, the way a frog is boiled. Each change was small enough to seem reasonable. A new machine here. A new database there. A new procedure that quietly moved one more piece of the process out of local hands. Nobody would have tolerated the whole thing at once, so they never had to.

The first people to see the strings were the Collier brothers.

James and Kenneth Collier spent twenty-five years investigating computerized vote fraud and published their findings in a book called [Votescam](#) in 1992. Their answer to why incumbents never lose was blunt: because we did not even vote them in. The brothers were ignored. Their book was pulled from bookstore shelves and removed from the Library of Congress index. Jim Collier was jailed by an Attorney General (Janet Reno) who would not investigate. That was the first time citizens opened their eyes, and nothing was done.

Then came the Help America Vote Act of 2002. Congress passed it after the Florida recount, and it authorized roughly three point three billion dollars in grants to states that replaced lever and punch-card machines with electronic voting systems. The law did not require paper ballots. It required machines. That is the federal government paying states to make elections less visible, less understandable, and less countable by hand. The more computerized the system becomes, the harder it is for a citizen to see what is happening, and the easier it is for the people who profit from the system to operate without being noticed.

Right as that law was passing, a fifty-two-year-old freelance writer and grandmother from Seattle named Bev Harris stumbled onto an article during a lunch break. She began researching electronic voting machines and found a disturbing pattern of Republican upsets and machine malfunctions. In January 2003, she found the source code for Diebold, one of the largest voting machine manufacturers, sitting unprotected on a public server. She downloaded it, and among the files was a folder called 'rob-georgia', containing instructions to replace files on the twenty-two thousand new machines Georgia had just purchased. She posted the files on her website in February 2003. Computer scientists worldwide examined the code and found security weaknesses that made the system a rigger's dream. She wrote the book *Black Box Voting: Ballot-Tampering in the 21st Century*,

published in 2004, and founded the nonprofit Black Box Voting that same year. She was dismissed as a conspiracy theorist, but the evidence she found was real, and it was confirmed by Diebold's own internal memos.

The Colliers saw the pattern early and were silenced. Harris found the proof a decade later and was dismissed. Together they give the article a documented sequence: the warning came first, the proof came second, and the system kept growing in between.

The Front Door

The capture reaches all the way to the front door of the election. Voter registration used to be handled by the counties, but now that control was seized by the states. Paper poll books used to sit on the check-in table, and local elected officials used them to verify voters in person. Now electronic poll books are being pushed everywhere, and the check-in process itself is moving into centralized electronic control, out of the hands of the citizens and their local elected officials.

The entire project is about centralizing control. Every piece of the election, from registration to check-in to tabulation to audit, is being moved into the hands of government and private corporations, while citizens and local officials are being blocked out of the process.

The Citizen Election Officials

There are honest election officials in this country. I believe most of them are honest. They are citizen election officials, and they are trying to do a good job. But their hands are tied. They are dictated to by the state on how to run elections, and they have no freedom to add oversight, allow hand counts, or verify eligibility on their own.

When they try, the system attacks them. County commissioners who approved hand counts have been demonized. Election officials have been sued, thrown in jail, and thrown in prison. Even the attorneys who represent them have been ruthlessly attacked. The state goes after the very officials who try to run clean elections. That is the proof that the system is not broken by accident. It is defended by force.

The Oversight Theater

When citizens point out that they have no oversight, they are told that oversight exists. Logic and accuracy testing. Risk-limiting audits. The problem is that the government and the private corporations that control the elections are the same entities that control how the testing is done and how the auditing is done.

The logic and accuracy test is a one-time check. The vendors write the procedure, and citizen election officials create a test deck of ballots covering different positions on the ballot. Those ballots are run through the programmed machine, and the output is checked against the paper. It is a show. It gives officials a false sense of security, because a system can be programmed to act any way it wants. It can run perfectly during the test and behave differently during the real election, and no one would know the difference.

The source code is hidden behind proprietary claims. Citizens are not allowed to see it. Even if they could, they could not confirm that what is running on the machines matches what was written. Citizen election officials cannot do that either. They lack the knowledge and the ability. Some of those codebases are over two million lines. There are so many areas where the vote can be manipulated, and most citizens and most citizen election officials think computers are simple things. They do not

understand what a bad actor could really do with these systems.

The risk-limiting audit is the same story. For instance in Colorado, several counties do not hand count ballots for their audit. The process pulls up ballot images on a screen for some pre-chosen ballots. Citizens scan those ballots and compare what they see on the screen. They are essentially re-voting the ballots, and the results go to the Secretary of State, who reports back whether they got them right. The citizens go through the motions, but the audit has been taken over by the state. Any professional third-party auditor would design the audit mechanism themselves. Instead, the entity that controls the elections also controls how the audit is performed.

The Ballots

It all hinges on one question: does the machine output match what is on the paper ballots themselves? If someone were allowed to hand count those ballots, the answer would be known. But citizens are never allowed to hand count the ballots. They have done everything they can to keep citizens from getting their hands on them. Even the people who run the elections are not allowed to hand count them. In some states, it is illegal to hand count ballots.

That is the biggest indicator that something is going on inside the machines. They hide access and restrict access to the ballots as if their lives depend on it. The one check that would settle everything is the one check that has been made illegal.

The Real War

This is why the phrase election theft is too small. The theft is not one election or ten elections. The theft is the removal of the citizen from the process that is supposed to belong to the

citizen. Government and private corporations worked together to take control of elections from the American people, and they did it while citizens were fighting each other over which side stole which election.

That division is not an accident. It is the mechanism. As long as citizens are focused on each other, they are not focused on the system that took their elections. The people who benefit from the capture have every incentive to keep the fight horizontal, citizen against citizen, so that nobody looks up at who actually holds the tool.

What This Is Not

This is not a claim that every election result is false. It is a claim that the system that produces those results can no longer be verified by the people it governs. Those are different things, and the difference matters.

A result you cannot verify is not a result you can trust, and a system that refuses verification is not a system that serves the people.

The Experiment

If you want to find out how much your government does not want you to have oversight over your elections, or how much it does not want you to know what the real totals are, make one small demand. Ask to hand count the ballots in your county. Then watch the reaction. The response you get is the evidence.

Then, when you are ready to do what we all must do: [The Declaration](#)