

Why Americans Across the Spectrum Distrust Voting Machines

OPINION

WRITTEN BY
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Donald Trump's Truth Social post this morning—pledging to ban voting machines and mail-in ballots by executive order—was instantly polarizing. But here's the hard truth: Trump isn't the only one raising alarms. From progressives in Pennsylvania to independents in New Jersey, Americans of all stripes are increasingly skeptical of the machines that count their votes. And they have good reason.

The Montana Example: Ripley's Vanishing Votes

In Montana, Senator Ripley's own rural precinct saw every single one of his votes shifted to his opponent by an ES&S tabulator programming error. All 25 ballots in that precinct—including those cast by Ripley himself, his wife, and their relatives—were wrongly credited to his competitor.

This happened back in 2012, and the election was officially certified with the error in place, because neither the county's audit process nor the state's certification procedures caught it—and nothing has been implemented since then that would have caught these errors. The only reason it came to light is because the precinct was so small and personal—Ripley and his family knew immediately that something was wrong. In a larger precinct, where votes are more anonymous and diverse, the mistake might never have been noticed at all.

When Ripley reported the discrepancy to the county clerk, she had no independent way to check. Because ES&S's tabulator software is proprietary, only the manufacturer was allowed to review the code. ES&S admitted Ripley was



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correct, but insisted the problem affected only that one precinct and one race. Ripley won in a landslide regardless, but the case leaves lingering doubts: if such an obvious error could slip past certification, what about less obvious ones? How many have gone undetected—or been quietly swept aside—because they weren't as glaring as a candidate's entire home precinct voting "against" him?

Other States, Same Problem

Montana's experience is part of a disturbing national pattern:

In Monmouth County, New Jersey (2022), ES&S machines double-counted votes because the vendor never installed a required software patch. A school board race outcome flipped after the error was discovered.

In Northampton County, Pennsylvania (2023), ballot summaries printed the opposite of what voters selected. Officials swore the back-end tallies were "correct," but the fiasco destroyed confidence. This echoed an almost identical failure in 2019.

In DeKalb County, Georgia (2022), a candidate's results showed "zero" votes at a precinct where she and her family had cast ballots. A full hand count changed the standings and determined who advanced to the runoff.

In Kennesaw, Georgia (2022), a missing memory card meant the reported winner was actually the loser once the votes were finally tallied.

And in Antrim County, Michigan (2020), a configuration error briefly flipped results in a deep-red county, fueling national conspiracy theories even though a full hand audit later confirmed the outcome.

The Common Thread: Trust

In each case, officials insisted "the system worked" because the errors were eventually found. But that is cold comfort. If results can be certified with glaring errors, if winners can become losers after the fact, and if the only people allowed to check the machines are the very companies that built them, then the system is not working.

Americans don't want speed; they want certainty. They don't want vendor assurances; they want ballots they can see, touch, and count. Confidence in elections doesn't come from proprietary code. It comes from a hand-marked paper ballot, counted in public, with results anyone can verify.

Until we return to that, don't be surprised when more and more Americans—Republican, Democrat, and independent alike—join the call to scrap the machines. 🗳️