

# U.S. elections still vulnerable to rigging, disruption

By MICHAEL RUBINKAM and FRANK BAJAK  
Associated Press

ALLENTOWN, Pa. — Jill Stein's bid to recount votes in Pennsylvania was in trouble even before a federal judge shot it down Dec. 12. That's because the Green Party candidate's effort stood little chance of detecting potential fraud or error in the vote — there was basically nothing to recount.

Pennsylvania is one of 11 states where the majority of voters use antiquated machines that store votes electronically, without printed ballots or other paper-based backups that could be used to double-check the balloting. There's almost no way to know if they've accurately recorded individual votes — or if anyone tampered with the count.

More than 80 percent of Pennsylvanians who voted Nov. 8 cast their ballots on such machines, according to VotePA, a nonprofit seeking their replacement. VotePA's Marybeth Kuznik described the proposed recount this way: "You go to the computer and you say, 'OK, computer, you counted this a week-

and-a-half ago. Were you right the first time?"

These paperless digital voting machines, used by roughly 1 in 5 U.S. voters last month, present one of the most glaring dangers to the security of the rickety, underfunded U.S. election system. Like many electronic voting machines, they are vulnerable to hacking. But other machines typically leave a paper trail that could be manually checked. The paperless digital machines open the door to potential election rigging that might not ever be detected.

Their prevalence also magnifies other risks in the election system, simply because error or fraud is harder to catch when vote counts can't be verified. And like other voting machines adopted since the 2000 election, the paperless systems are nearing the end of their useful life — yet there is no comprehensive plan to replace them.

"If I were going to hack this election, I would go for the paperless machines because they are so hard to check," said Barbara Simons, the co-author of "Broken Ballots," a study of flawed U.S. voting technology.

Stein described her recount effort as a way to ensure that the 2016 election wasn't tainted by hacking or fraud. There's no evidence of either so far — a fact federal judge Paul Diamond cited prominently in his decision halting the Pennsylvania recount.

Stein pursued similar recounts in Wisconsin and Michigan, to little avail. Those states use more reliable paper-based voting technologies. (The Electoral College certified Donald Trump's presidential victory last week.)

But a cadre of computer scientists from major universities backed Stein's recounts to underscore the vulnerability of U.S. elections. These researchers have successfully hacked e-voting machines for more than a decade in tests commissioned by New York, California, Ohio and other states.

Stein and her witnesses said worries about fraud were justified given U.S. charges that Russia meddled in the 2016 presidential campaign. Emails of top Democrats were hacked and leaked. Over the summer, hackers also tried to breach the voter registration databases of

Arizona and Illinois using Russia-based servers, U.S. officials said. Election networks in at least 20 states were probed for vulnerabilities.

"It's a target-rich environment," said Rice University computer scientist Dan Wallace. Researchers would like to see the U.S. move entirely to computer-scannable paper ballots, because paper can't be hacked.

The U.S. voting system — a loosely regulated, locally managed patchwork of more than 3,000 jurisdictions overseen by the states — employs more than two dozen types of machinery from 15 manufacturers. Elections officials across the nation say they take great care to secure their machines from tampering. They are locked away when not in use and sealed to prevent tampering.

All of that makes national elections very difficult to steal without getting caught.

But difficult is not impossible. Wallace and his colleagues believe a crafty team of pros could strike surgically, focusing on select counties in a few battleground states where "a small nudge might be decisive," he said.

Most voting machines in the

U.S. are at or near the end of their expected lifespans. Forty-three states use machines more than a decade old. Most run on vintage operating systems such as Windows 2000 that pre-date the iPhone and are no longer updated with security patches.

On Nov. 8, election officials across the U.S. handled numerous complaints of aging touchscreens losing calibration and casting votes for the wrong candidate.

But while many experts agree the U.S. voting system needs an upgrade, no one wants to pay to fix it.

Money flowed after the 2000 Florida recount debacle, when punch-card technology was discredited by hanging chads. Congress appropriated \$4 billion for election upgrades; states raced to replace punch cards and lever machines with digital technology.

But when that money ran out, so did the ability of many states to address security concerns overlooked in their initial rush. Four in 5 U.S. election officials polled by New York University's Brennan Center last year said they are desperate to replace equipment but lack the cash.

## FIRE: House built around 1914 in colonial revival style

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"Everyone's safe and everyone's OK," she said.

Ciraulo said the state and city fire marshals determined a space heater caused the fire. He said the third floor was a total loss and the second floor sustained heavy water damage and light fire damage. Sections of the third floor façade were heavily charred.

According to a city database of historic buildings, the house was built circa 1914 in the colonial revival style. The home, known as the Rice House after its first owner G.M. Rice, has a wood frame and concrete foundation.

While three local departments helped Pendleton, Ciraulo said more personnel would have made for a more effective and safer attack on the fire. The city, though, cannot afford to pay for shifts of 15 firefighters, and most of the fire agencies near Pendleton are volunteer. The local need for more firefighters, Ciraulo said, reflects a national trend.

The National Fire Protection Association reported there are 1,134,400 career and volunteer firefighters in the United States. The number of career firefighters per 1,000 population has been constant since 1986; however, the number of volunteer firefighters per 1,000 population has



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Fire charred this window at the home of Carter and Nancy Kerns to do an investigation of a during a Christmas night fire that did extensive damage to the three-story home.

decreased.

Ciraulo and Stanton said the requirements and standards for volunteer fire-

fighters are essentially the same for career firefighters, and most folks cannot make that kind of commitment.

And Pendleton, Ciraulo added, lacks housing at its fire station for as many volunteers as it could use.

"We had to turn some away before because we don't have the room," he said.

The city hopes to address at least the housing issue with a \$10 million bond option it will put to voters in May. If approved, the fire station will be moved to a larger building at the old St. Anthony Hospital site.

The Pendleton Fire Department fought 278 fires from 2013-2015, according to the department's national reporting data. Brush fires topped the list at 47, grass fires were second with 42, and building fires accounted for 41. Passenger vehicle fires came in at No. 4 with 21, and outside rubbish fire and the like rounded out the top five with 20.

The data also shows Pendleton fire, like so many agencies, continues to see an increase in calls for service. The department had 2,922 in 2013, and two years later had 3,184. Most of those were for emergency medical services, which rose about 11.5 percent in the period.

Ciraulo said the basis of being in emergency response is being ready for anything at any time. Achieving that readiness, though, is challenging for rural departments.



AP Photo/Marco Garcia

## Japan PM to visit Pearl Harbor

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, second from left bows at the Ehime Maru Memorial at Kakaako Waterfront Park, Monday in Honolulu. The memorial is dedicated to the victims of a 2001 collision off the coast of Hawaii between the Ehime Maru, a fisheries training vessel, and a U.S. naval submarine. On Tuesday, Abe will become the first Japanese prime minister to visit the memorial that honors sailors and Marines killed in the attack on Pearl Harbor.

## POLL: Republicans optimistic

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expressed some of that optimism.

"Next year will be better than this year, because people will have more jobs and they'll have more money to spend," said Bourema Tamboura, a Harlem resident behind the wheel of a New York car service.

"I'm hoping 2017 will be better," added Elizabeth Flynn, 62, an elementary schoolteacher from Peabody, Massachusetts. "You've got to be optimistic, and I'm going to try."

Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say 2016 was worse for the country than 2015. And Republicans are especially likely to feel that 2017 will be even better for them personally.

University of Miami professor Benjamin Alsup said he needed only three words to explain why 2016 felt worse for him: "Trump, Trump, Trump!"

Robert Greenstone, a New York commercial real estate broker, said the political discourse leading up to Republican Donald Trump's election as president played havoc with people's emotions.

"The amount of disinformation made people suspect of everything and everyone, even their neighbors," he said.

Election leads news events

The U.S. elections top Americans' list of 10 top news events in 2016. Three-quarters called the presidential election and Trump's victory very or extremely important.

Sixty-three percent ranked mass shootings and bombings in Orlando, Florida, and in Belgium, Turkey, Pakistan and France as personally important news stories of the year.

Fifty-one percent said they found news stories about the deaths of people at the hands of police officers, or news about ambush attacks on police in three states, to be among the year's most important news events.

Fourth on the list are 43 percent who described the spread of the Zika virus as important.

The three events described by the largest percentages of Americans as not too important included

the death of Muhammad Ali (50 percent), approval of recreational marijuana use in four states (43 percent), and the death of Fidel Castro (40 percent).

### Top moments in pop culture and sports

A majority of Americans, including 7 in 10 Midwesterners, called November's World Series win for the Chicago Cubs to end their 108-year drought memorable.

Of nine other pop-culture items tested, two were called memorable by about half of Americans: the death of Prince, David Bowie and Leonard Cohen; and the Olympic victories of the U.S. women's gymnastics team.

The two least-notable events for Americans, of the 10 possible choices in the poll, were the Angelina Jolie-Brad Pitt divorce filing and the "Pokemon Go" app game phenomenon, each described by most as forgettable.

### Ring in the new year

About half of Americans plan to celebrate the New Year at home. About 2 in 10 plan to go out to a friend or family member's home, and 1 in 10 to a bar or restaurant. About a quarter don't plan to celebrate at all.

About 6 in 10 plan to watch the Times Square ball drop, nearly all of whom will watch on TV.

The AP-Times Square Alliance Poll of 1,007 adults was conducted online Dec. 9-11, using a sample drawn from GfK's probability-based KnowledgePanel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population.

## BAIRS: Jerry quickly acquainted with local sports teams

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said he would rather drive a school bus than his Jeep through the snow.

"They don't do too bad in the snow, actually," he said. "Just don't get in too much of a hurry or try to stop too quick."

The job can be long hours — when he first started he was driving in Heppner a lot, and said on those days he would leave the house at 3:30 a.m. and not get home until 7:30 at night. He also drives sports teams to overnight tournaments.

Driving teams to games gives Jerry plenty of time sitting in the stands watching everything from Irrigon volleyball to Boardman basketball, so he can talk knowledgeably about which games local teams pulled off a lucky

victory, got a well-deserved win or let what should have been a triumph slip through their fingers.

Some teams are cheerful whether they win or lose, he said, while in other cases if they lose "it's going to be a long ride home."

After completing her first year of college at Brigham Young University Idaho, Breilynn currently works for Java Junkies. She just sent in an application to serve an 18-month mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, however, so she is waiting on pins and needles for a fat white envelope to arrive in the mail, detailing where in the world she will serve and what language she will be speaking.

"I'm excited," she said. "I know wherever I'll go, I'll

be able to serve people, so that helps the anxiety a bit."

Tammy says her mom intuition is telling her Breilynn will go to Thailand, but she could just as easily get sent to Germany or Tennessee. She said she's nervous about sending her oldest off into parts unknown but she's proud of

Breilynn for going.

For now, however, they family is enjoying the holiday break together and said they hope to continue to make new friends in the area in 2017.

Contact Jade McDowell at [jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com](mailto:jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4536.

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