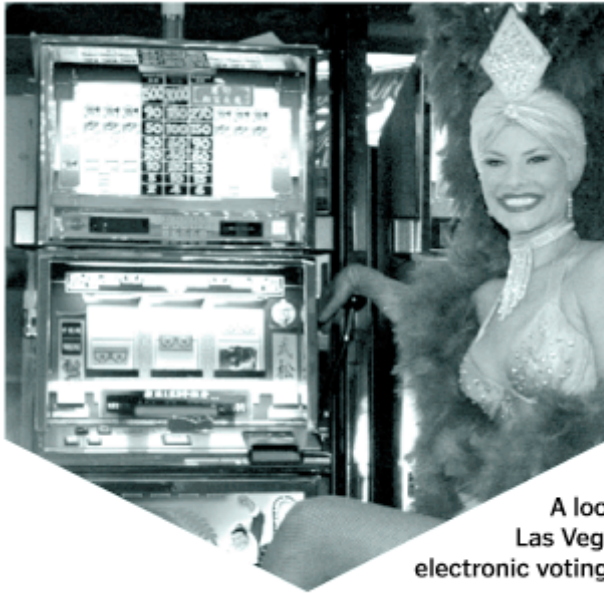


How To Steal an Election

It's easier to rig an electronic voting machine than a Las Vegas slot machine, says University of Pennsylvania visiting professor Steve Freeman. That's because Vegas slots are better monitored and regulated than America's voting machines, Freeman writes in a book out in July that argues, among other things, that President Bush may owe his 2004 win to an unfair vote count. We'll wait to read his book before making a judgment about that. But Freeman has assembled comparisons that suggest Americans protect their vices more than they guard their rights, according to data he presented at an October meeting of the American Statistical Association in Philadelphia.

American Statistical Association in Philadelphia



A look at how Las Vegas slots and electronic voting machines compare:

LAS VEGAS SLOTS

ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES



Software

State of Nevada has access to all software. Illegal to use software that is not on file.

Software is a trade secret.



Spot-Checking

State gaming inspectors show up unannounced at casinos to compare computer chips with those on file. If there is a discrepancy, the machine is shut down and investigated.

No checks are required. Election officials have no chip to compare with the one found in the machine.



Background Scrutiny

Manufacturers subjected to background checks. Employees are investigated for criminal records.

Citizens have no way of knowing, for example, whether programmers have been convicted of fraud.



Equipment Certification

By a public agency at arm's length from manufacturers. Public questions invited.

By for-profit companies chosen and paid by the manufacturers. No public information on how the testing is done.



Handling Disputes

Casino must contact the Gaming Control Board, which has investigators on call round the clock. They can open up machines to inspect internal mechanisms and records of recent gambling outcomes.

In most cases, a voter's only recourse is to call a number at the board of elections that may or may not work to lodge a complaint that may or may not be investigated.

GRAPHIC: The Washington Post - March 16, 2006

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