

With 19 states deprived of exit polls, the blind are even blinder

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by Jonathan Simon

According to the "father of exit polling," the late Warren Mitofsky, exit polls are intended solely for academic analysis of voting patterns and opinions (e.g., what did 25 to 34 year-old white males regard as the most important issue?) and not as any sort of check on the validity of the vote counts. Unless, of course, you are anywhere else on Earth (other than America), where exit polls are routinely employed, often with the sanction of the government of the United States, as just such a check mechanism, and have frequently led to official calls for electoral investigations and indeed electoral re-dos.

In America, where vote counts in competitive and significant races consistently come out to the right of the exit polls (it is called the "red shift"), the media machine has waved off the exit polls, concluding, without so much as a quick peek under the hood of the vote-counting computers, that the exit polls must be "off" because they "oversample Democrats," conclusive evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. We're the Beacon Of Democracy, dammit--we don't need no stinkin' exit polls! We're "one nation under God" so our elections must be honest!

Nonetheless, exit polls remain critical to whatever election forensics can be undertaken to assess the honesty and validity of our concealed and partisan-controlled computerized vote counting system from election to election. This is because all "hard" evidence—memory cards, computer code, server logs, actual ballots where such exist—is strictly off limits to public investigation, being the protected proprietary dominion of a handful of secretive corporations (one of which is aptly named "Dominion") with ties to the radical right.

So the announcement that this November the media consortium known as the National Election Pool (NEP) has canceled all exit polling in 19 states comes as a blow to "academic analysts" and election forensics experts alike. The non-exit poll states are AK, AR, DE, DC, GA, HI, ID, KY, LA, NE, ND, OK, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, WV, WY. Of course all these states are noncompetitive, solid reds or blues (with the exception of a Senate race or two) so what's the problem??

The problem is that Karl Rove now has 19 states to mine votes to cover a Romney popular vote loss (undermining and casting suspicion upon his easily arranged Electoral College 'win'), without the remotest trace of the theft, not even the telltale "red shift." This was done in 2004 for Bush, and it showed up in the red shift in states like Alaska and New York, as millions of votes were shifted in non-competitive states where there was little forensic vigilance. And if it turns out that they need even more votes for Romney, with the public now 100% blind to these 19 states, they'll have them by the millions.

The NEP and the networks will merely shrug and say, "Who needs exit polls (especially discredited exit polls) in noncompetitive states?" and "We needed to redeploy our limited resources." I feel their pain: exit polling is difficult/expensive and more so now with early/absentee voting and cellphones. Put it in context though: we spent \$2 billion per week for years to bring "democracy" to Iraq; you know \$2 billion would buy approximately 200 years of biennial exit polls at their current cost here in the good old USA! I guess having democracy for seven generations in America is not worth one week in Iraq. Makes sense, doesn't it?

And, while we're at it, what a stupid way to insure democracy, a few volunteer democracy fans following along after the election circus with a forensic broom and dustpan, then having their evidence ignored or ridiculed by the media, which, just to show how accepting it is, accepts on 100% pure unadulterated blind faith every number that comes out of the partisan operated and controlled blackness that is our oh-so-convenient vote counting system. Again for that same \$2 billion week in Iraq, we could fund hand-counted paper ballots (if we were unwilling to assume it as a civic responsibility on a par with jury duty) at a decent payscale for an entire generation.

Are we that cheap, that stingy, that lazy, when it comes to this democracy, this homeland that we profess to "love" and seem to be so concerned about protecting?