To every Journalist and Media Reformer assembled here in Boston:

How does the Big Lie flourish and prosper? By being criminal beyond belief. By operating in safety behind a towering "never happen here" wall of denial. By a foolish assumption of immunity. By being too big a story to be a story within the bounds of journalistic decorum.

The gruesome truth is that American elections can be rigged and are being rigged because the American media treats election rigging as something that—all evidence notwithstanding—could never happen here. Period, end of story, move on.

And we are moving on. To an unrecognizable America. An America in which, when even obscene amounts of cash can't buy enough votes, those votes can be manufactured (added, switched, deleted wholesale) in the darkness of cyberspace. It’s too easy. And it’s happening. A Big Lie is consuming America.

We ask each of you in turn—reporter, editor, commentator, reformer—are you willing to sit back and let this happen on your watch? Can you take 15 minutes to stand before this picture, taking it in, and then ask yourself, if we have been persuasive, what you are going to do?

Let’s begin with the voting and counting process itself. It is now virtually everywhere in America a computerized process and those computers are under the proprietary control of a handful of corporations. Would you cheerfully hand your vote to a little man behind a curtain and wait for him to come back out and tell you who won? What if he were wearing a "Peace" button, or a "Palin-For-President" button, or some other partisan identifier?

How is what we are doing as we vote in America any different?

Study after study—from Princeton, to Johns Hopkins, to NYU’s Brennan Center, to the California Secretary of State’s office, to the GAO itself (see http://tinyurl.com/3hz7xj2)—conclude that this counting process is obscenely vulnerable to insider manipulation and outsider hacking. So have many studies examining computerized voting abroad—which is why countries such as Germany, Ireland, and Holland have begun turning back to human counted ballots. There is consensus verging on unanimity among the experts.

How comfortable are you with that? Can you go about your business with democracy hanging from such a thin thread, with America that exposed to a silent coup?

Perhaps we should leave it there. Because it makes sense, does it not, that we can’t continue to accept the risk of systemic sabotage inherent in such a counting process. Not when a return to public hand counting of the federal and statewide contests would restore transparency and remove the risk of wholesale manipulation, at a civic burden far smaller than jury duty. Surely we can take a few hours every two years to count some votes for our democracy.
It is a slam dunk. Or should be. Except . . . , as with global warming and other incipient disasters, mere vulnerability to something that might happen proves to be a poor motivator of decisive and courageous action. We reform in the wake of calamity, not in anticipation of it.

And here we come to the crux of our dilemma and to our Catch-22. Because as long as we speak or write about vulnerabilities and hypotheticals, there seems to be at least the hope of dialogue. Heck, some among the media—Lou Dobbs comes to mind—have raised the very issue in the run-up to elections: “Will Your Vote Be Counted? Tune in tomorrow.” But that permissible question proves transient, and it evaporates as the votes are counted on Election Night and following. Any attempt to offer evidence of actual manipulation, actual theft? Not welcome. Forget it. Omerta.

How come? Is it because it remains beyond the pale of belief that such easy vulnerability is actually being exploited? This even in the age of Barry Bonds, A-Rod, Lance Armstrong, Alberto Contador, Bernie Madoff, Goldman Sachs, and the whole parade of high-stakes cheating scandals, not to mention the mounting wave of cybercrime, to which even sophisticated financial institutions and the Pentagon have proven vulnerable? Elections are the highest stakes game of all.

But America is the Beacon of Democracy dammit—it could never happen here. So Americans are instructed—by you, the media—to accept on pure faith that those in control of, or having access to, our privatized and concealed voting systems will devoutly serve the public trust rather than any conflicting private or partisan agenda. Any evidence that this faith is misplaced is ignored. Too dangerous. Too destabilizing. Too disturbing. Too un-American. And yet, without this evidence, everything is just hypothetical, vulnerable, possible, and there is no imperative for change.

So we now bring forth a synopsis of the “evidence,” knowing well that it has been as indigestible as shards of glass. We know of no easy way to make it go down. We know only that we continue to ignore it at our great peril. The grave of a democracy is a mass grave—there’s room for all of us.

Let’s begin with who is doing the counting. Look into the pedigrees of ES&S and Diebold/Premier/Dominion, corporations that supply and program the equipment. Look further into the “boots on the ground” outfits—such as Triad, LHS, SmartTech—that have or have had critical roles in the “processing” of votes. Check up on the background and affiliations of the Urosevich brothers, Bob and Todd, and some of the other figures (remember Wally O’Dell, Chair of Diebold?) involved in the private and secretive world of computerized vote counting. You will find this world populated and controlled by a cadre of radical right-wingers, many with strong connections to the Christian Far-Right. An odd group, don’t you agree, to entrust with the secret counting of our nation’s votes. We might ask, for starters, what drew such a radically partisan crowd to this particular niche (there’s not much business profit in it: before some Justice Dept. reshuffling, ES&S recently acquired all of Diebold/Premier’s voting operations for $5 million, about the value of a single large-county equipment contract). Certainly would be a powerful perch for ends-justify-the-means true-believers.

We could stop there: extreme systemic vulnerability under the opaque control of partisans who might be tempted—given what we know of human nature and what we have seen of ethics in our own era—to insert a few lines of code, put a thumb on the scale. Perhaps that would be enough to move you to determined and sustained action. Perhaps if you knew that tens of millions of votes are now “processed” on off-site, out-of-state servers run by outfits such as the late Mike Connell’s SmartTech, which took much of the 2004 Ohio vote to Chattanooga, Tennessee before returning it to county tabulators. Are you comfortable with that? Don’t you wonder why votes now have to be networked around and processed? Don’t you want to ask who is doing the processing?

There’s a chilling reality taking shape here and we might as well fill out the picture. There is something known as the “red shift.” It occurs when votecounts are more Republican (or more in favor of whatever candidate or ballot issue the Right supports) than the baselines—including exit polls, tracking polls, noncompetitive elections, and handcounts. Since 2002 the red shift has been pervasive. That’s right: for all intents and purposes, there is no blue shift. The votecounts are virtually always shifted in the same direction, election after election after election. Same with the huge catalogue of
purported “glitches” and anomalies (in 2004, for example, the ratio of reported Kerry-to-Bush flips vs. Bush-to-Kerry
flips—press one, get the other—on DREs was 20 to 1). Not random, not 50-50, as actual glitches would break. But to the
right. Always to the right. Same direction as the pedigree of the vendors and programmers. We’re not making this up—
it’s too easy to check.

Let’s hit the high notes:

- **2002**: Computerized voting was gaining a foothold in the wake of the Help America Vote Act, Mitch McConnell’s
  brainchild. The VNS (network) exit polls were withheld from the public (on the pretext of a system glitch),
  masking glaring disparities in at least several key contests, including the Georgia Senate (Cleland—13% swing
  from tracking polls) and Governor (Barnes), where unverifiable paperless DREs (touchscreens) had just been
  deployed, and where software “patches” were inserted by Diebold shortly before the election in 22,000 DREs.
  (see “Diebold and Max Cleland’s ‘Loss’ in Georgia,” by Robert F. Kennedy, in Loser Take All: Election Fraud and

- **2004**: Computerized voting was predominant, with DREs and Optical Scan (Opscan) equipment counting more
  than 80% of the votes nationally. Ohio votes were “processed,” as noted above, in Tennessee. Exit polls showed
  Kerry the victor in Ohio. Vote counts were red-shifted, relative to exit polls, in 11 of the 12 “battleground” states.
  The networks and pollsters thereupon hastened to discredit their own polls, though they had been accurate
  enough for decades to permit early calls of even the tightest contests. It was put forward that Bush voters were
  more reluctant to respond to the exit polls, though careful analysis revealed that the highest level of exit poll
  response was in Bush strongholds and the hypothesis didn’t fit the data. Strangely there was no evidence of
  “reluctant Bush responder” dynamics in noncompetitive states. And the pollsters, in making the reluctant Bush
  responder excuse, conveniently forgot that they had weighted their polls to party ID in such a way as to
  neutralize any such response bias. Keith Olbermann bravely and briefly covered the uproar, then went on a long
  vacation and dropped it cold. (See Freeman, S. and Bleifuss, J. Was the 2004 presidential election stolen? Exit
  polls, election fraud, and the official count, Seven Stories Press, New York 2006)

- **2005**: Ohio again. Election reform ballot proposition, leading by 28% in Cleveland Plain Dealer tracking poll on the
  eve of the election, was defeated by 25% when the votes were counted, an overnight net swing of 53%; in the
  three other ballot propositions, the Plain Dealer poll was spot-on.

- **2006**: Now the real “fun” begins, because the capacity to manipulate has proliferated at the same time that our
  forensic tools have become more refined. The result is a measure of covert manipulation that was, or should
  have been, truly staggering (see http://electiondefensealliance.org/files/LandslideDenied_v.9_071507.pdf ;
  also reprinted in Loser Take All). There was a national red shift in the elections for the House of a total of 3
  million votes, relative to exit polls (there was a comparable red shift relative to tracking polls and a comparable
  red shift in competitive Senate races). Of critical importance, this analysis could not be debunked on the basis of
  alleged exit poll sampling bias, because the sample was shown to be to the right, not the left, of the actual
  electorate. This analysis has never been challenged. No attempt has been made to refute it. It has simply been
  ignored. Additional analysis revealed a “targeting” pattern, in which the more competitive a contest the more
  likely it was to be red shifted, a pattern pathognomonic of rigging (see

- **2008**: An Obama victory, Democratic sweep. Sound the All Clear, for why would the suspected manipulators rig
  to lose? They didn’t. They rigged to win. Once again, there was a massive red shift, even greater than in 2004
  and 2006 (see Charnin R., Proving Election Fraud: Phantom Voters, Uncounted Votes, and the National Exit
  Poll, AuthorHouse, Bloomington IN, 2010). But, in both the 2006 and 2008 elections, unexpected 11th-hour
  events (in 2006 the Foley and related scandals, in 2008 the collapse of Lehmann Brothers and the subsequent
market crash) dramatically altered the electoral dynamics (in 2006, for instance, the Democratic margin in the Cook Generic Congressional Ballot jumped from 9% in the first week of October to 26% the week of the election, a Republican freefall of epic proportions; a similar fate overcame McCain in the wake of the economy’s collapse). These political sea changes swamped a red shift that turned out to be under-calibrated, and they came too late to permit recalibration and redeployment of tainted memory cards and malicious code. The devil is in the details but all these red flags were again ignored, trampled in the Obama victory parade.

- **2010:** The Coakley-Brown special election here in Massachusetts was a shocking result that put the Tea Party on the map, took away the Democrats’ filibuster-proof majority, and set expectations for a major move to the right in November. There were no exit polls, no spot checks, no audits, not a single check on the OpScan counts, not a single memory card examined for malicious code. A 100% pure, unadulterated, faith-based election. An election that could have been stolen with virtually zero risk and enormous reward. And guess what? In the 70 jurisdictions where ballots were hand-counted, Coakley won (see http://electiondefensealliance.org/files/BelieveIt_OrNot_100904.pdf). In fact, statewide, there was an 8% disparity between hand count to computer count jurisdictions, a red shift in line with that measured in 2004, 2006, and 2008, and enough to reverse the outcome and avoid a recount. Well perhaps those hand count jurisdictions were more Democratic (they weren’t, they were more Republican): perhaps they were in Coakley’s part of the state (they weren’t; in fact, in her only other statewide race, a noncompetitive race, she did better in the OpScan than the handcount jurisdictions). In fact we examined and ruled out every benign explanation for the huge and outcome-determinative disparity.

Next up was a Democratic primary in South Carolina which pitted a known and respected candidate (Judge Vic Rawl) against a cipher (Alvin Greene) who made zero campaign appearances, didn’t have so much as a website, was facing indictment on pornography-related charges, and didn’t appear to have the personal funds needed for the election filing fee. The contest was for the nomination for US Senate, and a November match-up with incumbent Republican Jim DeMint, against whom Rawl had already closed to 7% in tracking polls. The votes were tallied on paperless DREs—the darkest of cyberspace. Greene “won” with 59% of the vote. Rawl brought a challenge before the Democratic State Committee. Several election integrity experts testified, citing, among other gross anomalies, huge disparities between early/absentee votes counted by OpScan and the DRE tallies. Greene did not appear. The Committee reacted favorably to Rawl’s challenge through the hearing, went into closed session, voted by an overwhelming margin to reject the challenge and close the matter (see http://www.bradblog.com/?p=7902).

Which brings us to the general election this past November, a great sweep for the Tea Party and the Right, with seismic implications for our nation. You’d think that by now the professionals at Edison/Mitofsky and the National Election Pool (NEP) would figure out how to get those exit polls right but, once again, we found our old friend the red shift—everywhere we looked. In the Senate elections (16 out of 18 competitive races red shifted), the Governorship elections (11 out of 13 races red shifted), and in the House (a total red shift of 1.9 million votes). We are still at work on the analysis but these are glaring red flags. Even more glaring is a comparison with 2006, where an election-eve Democratic margin of 26% in the Generic Congressional Ballot (“who do you intend to vote for in the election for US House in your district?”) translated into a net gain of 58 House seats by the Democrats. In 2010, however, a Republican Generic Congressional Ballot margin of 9% translated into a net gain of 125 seats and the epic sweep the media reported at face value.

A tad unsettling? Then add this to the pot. The infrastructure needed for election theft has become progressively more sophisticated and efficient. The off-site “processing” that, to our knowledge, pioneered in Ohio in 2004, has now been deployed in many more states. This mechanism allows real-time targeting and calibration of manipulations, which was not possible with pre-set, memory card-based rigs. So under-calibration
(as occurred in 2006 and 2008), as well as over-calibration, are a thing of the past. Using the off-site processing scheme, aka "man in the middle attack," vote counts can be altered surgically and elections stolen with a tidy and tiny numerical footprint. Election theft will become harder and harder to detect—unless someone is motivated to seriously investigate the off-site, out-of-state IP networks now "processing" our votes.

Perhaps you are about to protest, “Well these are all just numbers. What we need to see is real evidence. Then maybe we’ll do something.” Sorry, there is no "real" evidence. We, the public, have no access to memory cards, machines, hardware, software, code. It’s all proprietary, off-limits even to the government, secret. That’s the whole point: we are entrusting our nation and the bedrock protocol of its democracy to a concealed, secret process that keeps waving bright numerical red flags (as well as an endless parade of unidirectional "glitches" and anomalies), which you can choose to ignore because “they’re only numbers.” But numbers, if you can keep your eyes from glazing over, paint a picture. And the numbers can’t be what they’ve been for a decade now if elections are not being rigged. It’s as simple as that.

But we’re not quite done yet. Because even the numbers are beginning to lie. Our baselines—all except the surviving smattering of handcounts—are part of a feedback loop and are themselves being distorted—you guessed it!—to the right. Here’s why.

The pollsters—under the imperative to get elections right or go out of business—have all now turned to a tunable fudge factor known as the Likely Voter Cutoff Model (LVCM), which skews their samples about 5-8% to the right by disproportionately eliminating from the sample constituencies of the left, such as young, transient, poor, and non-white respondents (see http://electiondefensealliance.org/TheLVCM.pdf). As if that were not enough, both exit polls and pre-election polls are now weighted using demographic baselines drawn from the "adjusted" exit polls from prior elections. Since these adjustments are always to the right, to bring the exit polls to conformity with the vote counts (i.e., on the gospel assumption that the exit polls are always wrong, in the same direction, and the vote counts always right), and carry the demographics along to the right in the process, both current exit polls and pre-election polls are further skewed to the right. The unadjusted exit polls—themselves red shifted by this weighting process but lacking the LVCM to complete the distortion—remain somewhat to the left of the vote counts, but the pre-election polls, with the combined distortions of false-stratification and the LVCM pushing them anywhere up to 10% to the right, manage to accurately predict the electoral outcomes in competitive races. These methodologically contorted polls can get election results consistently right only if those election results are consistently wrong—that is, vote counts manipulated so that they no longer reflect the collective intent of the voting populace. In short, rigged elections. Here. In America. On your watch.

**2011:** There is a story in Wisconsin. It’s a miracle! 7583 votes magically found for the Republican candidate (found by a former employee of that candidate) in another “proxy” election with seismic implications. Just exactly enough votes to dodge the mandatory recount that would have revealed . . . who knows? Yet another coincidence? There’s a story in Wisconsin. It has the potential to blow the lid off the Big Lie. Anyone want to cover it?

I think that brings us up to date, though so very much has been left out in deference to time, space, and the modern attention span. We whose work is elections forensics have gathered data, performed analyses, presented evidence, proposed solutions, and begged for action for nearly a decade. The American media has covered its ears or, if it has listened at all, has, with a very few brave exceptions, scoffed. We are here at this "Reform" conference against our better judgment, trying perhaps one last time to open eyes to a reality none of us wishes to contemplate, but no less a reality for that. A threat of such enormity demands unblinking investigation, sustained rather than desultory attention, and individual and collective courage. Anything less and the Big Lie continues to flourish, corroding and destroying all that we are so proud of in our history.
All we can do is lay it out, piece by piece. You can, having read it, shrug, scoff, concoct contorted “benign explanations,” go on about your business as usual, let someone else deal with it.

Consider the following statement by Law Professor Stephen Carter, appearing in a recent *Newsweek*:

> I often assign my law students Kazuo Ishiguro’s 1989 novel *The Remains of the Day*, the tale of the perfect English butler struggling to come to terms with the sins of the great nobleman he once served. Today, we professionals constantly justify ourselves and our own conduct on the grounds that we are merely serving the interests of someone else—our clients, our readers, our viewers, our constituents. Ishiguro’s gracefully written novel forces us to confront the question whether, in serving others, we are yielding our human responsibility to make serious moral judgments.

Perhaps you will find within it inspiration. Perhaps you will, within your capacity as a journalist and guardian of the truth, choose to act.

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