

At the Center of It All: Missing Votes, Statistical Anomalies, and a Quiet Testing Lab Called Pro V&V

BY [YOUR MOM]

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> "YOU DON'T NEED TO CHANGE EVERY VOTE. YOU JUST NEED TO BEND THE MARGINS WHERE NOBODY'S LOOKING."

IN ROCKLAND COUNTY, NEW YORK, SOMETHING STRANGE HAPPENED IN THE 2024 GENERAL ELECTION.

INDEPENDENT SENATE CANDIDATE DIANE SARE WASN'T EXPECTING A LANDSLIDE. BUT WHAT SHE DIDN'T EXPECT — WHAT NO ONE DID — WAS FOR LEGALLY CAST VOTES TO VANISH.

SWORN AFFIDAVITS VS. MACHINE TALLIES

IN SEVERAL ROCKLAND PRECINCTS, VOTERS SWORE UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY THAT THEY HAD VOTED FOR SARE. THEIR AFFIDAVITS PAINT A DISTURBING PICTURE: NINE VOTERS CLAIMED TO HAVE SELECTED HER IN ONE DISTRICT, YET THE MACHINES RECORDED ONLY FIVE VOTES. IN ANOTHER, FIVE VOTES WERE ALLEGEDLY CAST, BUT ONLY THREE SHOWED UP.

> "I KNOW I VOTED FOR HER. I WAS DELIBERATE. I EVEN DOUBLE-CHECKED BEFORE HITTING SUBMIT," SAID ONE ROCKLAND VOTER IN A NOTARIZED AFFIDAVIT.

THE DISCREPANCIES WEREN'T ISOLATED. THEY FORMED A PATTERN.

THE KAMALA CONUNDRUM

MEANWHILE, A PARALLEL MYSTERY UNFOLDED: IN STRONGLY DEMOCRATIC DISTRICTS, VICE PRESIDENT KAMALA HARRIS — THE PRESUMED DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE FOR PRESIDENT — WAS UNDERPERFORMING HER TICKET. IN SOME CASES, HER NAME REPORTEDLY FAILED TO APPEAR AT ALL.

YET THESE WERE DISTRICTS SHOWING OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR SENATOR KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND, A FELLOW DEMOCRAT. IN SEVERAL, GILLIBRAND RECEIVED THOUSANDS OF VOTES. HARRIS? ZERO.

SMART ELECTIONS, A NONPARTISAN WATCHDOG GROUP, BEGAN COMPILING ANOMALIES ACROSS THE STATE AND FOUND SOMETHING BIGGER THAN ISOLATED ERROR: A 314,000-VOTE DROP-OFF BETWEEN THE SENATE AND PRESIDENTIAL CONTESTS.

THEIR CONCLUSION: SOMETHING DIDN'T ADD UP.

AND ON MAY 22, 2025, JUDGE RACHEL TANGUAY AGREED. IN HER RULING ON SMART LEGISLATION ET AL. V. ROCKLAND COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS, SHE ALLOWED THE CASE TO PROCEED TO DISCOVERY. A HEARING IS SET FOR SEPTEMBER 22, 2025.

BUT WHILE LAWSUITS TAKE TIME, VOTES DISAPPEAR IN AN INSTANT.

ENTER PRO V&V: THE INVISIBLE GATEKEEPERS

BEHIND THE MACHINES IN QUESTION — SPECIFICALLY THE ES&S (ELECTION SYSTEMS & SOFTWARE) BRAND USED IN NEW YORK — STANDS A LITTLE-KNOWN LAB WITH FEDERAL CREDENTIALS: PRO V&V.

BASED IN ALABAMA, PRO V&V HOLDS AN ELITE DESIGNATION AS A FEDERALLY ACCREDITED VOTING SYSTEM TEST LABORATORY (VSTL), ONE OF ONLY TWO SUCH ENTITIES IN THE U.S. ITS JOB IS TO VERIFY THE SECURITY AND FUNCTIONALITY OF UPDATES MADE TO VOTING SYSTEMS — HARDWARE, FIRMWARE, SOFTWARE. IN ESSENCE, IT'S THE TSA FOR ELECTION MACHINES.

BUT FROM MARCH TO SEPTEMBER 2024, PRO V&V QUIETLY SIGNED OFF ON A RAPID SERIES OF ES&S SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE UPDATES. NEARLY ALL WERE APPROVED UNDER A CLASSIFICATION CALLED "DE MINIMIS" — A DESIGNATION INTENDED FOR MINOR TWEAKS, LIKE REPLACING A POWER CABLE OR CORRECTING A SPELLING ERROR.

YET THE TIMING AND VOLUME OF THESE UPDATES RAISE EYEBROWS. MULTIPLE UPDATES FLOWED THROUGH JUST MONTHS BEFORE THE ELECTION. NONE RECEIVED THE MORE RIGOROUS REVIEW REQUIRED FOR SUBSTANTIAL MODIFICATIONS.

THE PUBLIC WAS NEVER TOLD.

THE DE MINIMIS LOOPHOLE

ELECTION INTEGRITY EXPERTS HAVE LONG WARNED ABOUT THE “DE MINIMIS” LOOPHOLE. IT ALLOWS VENDORS LIKE ES&S TO SELF-REPORT CHANGES AS INSIGNIFICANT. IF THE LAB AGREES — AS PRO V&V ROUTINELY DOES — THE UPDATE SAILS THROUGH WITHOUT PUBLIC SCRUTINY, STRESS TESTING, OR SOURCE CODE ANALYSIS.

BUT WHEN “MINOR” TWEAKS ARE APPROVED IN SEQUENCE — AND WHEN THOSE TWEAKS PRECEDE UNEXPLAINED VOTE DROP-OFFS — THE LINE BETWEEN TECHNICALITY AND TAMPERING BECOMES DANGEROUSLY BLURRED.

> “YOU HAVE TO ASK WHY THESE UPDATES WERE HAPPENING AT THAT PACE, SO CLOSE TO A HIGH-STAKES FEDERAL ELECTION,” SAYS JENNIFER COHEN, AN ELECTION SECURITY RESEARCHER. “AND WHY THE PUBLIC HAS NO WAY TO AUDIT THE BEFORE-AND-AFTER IMPACT.”

A BLACK BOX DEMOCRACY

ES&S MAINTAINS THAT ITS MACHINES ARE SECURE AND THAT ANY DISCREPANCIES ARE LIKELY DUE TO HUMAN ERROR OR ISOLATED MISCONFIGURATIONS. BUT IN A SYSTEM WHERE THE PUBLIC HAS NO ACCESS TO RAW BALLOT IMAGES, AUDIT LOGS, OR MACHINE CODE, THOSE REASSURANCES RING HOLLOW.

THE COURTS MAY EVENTUALLY DETERMINE IF ROCKLAND COUNTY WAS A GLITCH — OR SOMETHING MORE SINISTER.

BUT THE QUESTION REMAINS: IF A SMALL FEDERALLY-ACCREDITED LAB AND A HANDFUL OF OPAQUE MACHINE UPDATES CAN ALTER THE RESULTS — OR THE APPEARANCE OF RESULTS — IN A SWING STATE, WHAT EXACTLY IS SAFEGUARDING THE MACHINERY OF DEMOCRACY?

BECAUSE IN THE END, AS ONE ELECTION ATTORNEY PUT IT:

> "IF THE MACHINES SAY IT DIDN'T HAPPEN, IT'S LIKE IT NEVER DID."