

# HOW TO CONDUCT A PARALLEL ELECTION

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Corporate-controlled media and government, passage of The PATRIOT Act which illegally dismantles parts of the US Constitution, and corporate control of US elections is enough evidence to convince any thinking adult that the US is not a democracy, republican or otherwise.

One of the peaceful ways to implement Democracy is to create parallel institutions, which stand to fill the power vacuum created by public rejection of corrupt institutions – from banking to elections to media to police & military to public works to taxation, etc.

In the voter rights movement, grassroots orgs will be responsible for developing and implementing fair and honest elections in their own states. Once the majority votes in parallel elections (instead of or in addition to), and our parallel media reports conflicting results, the “official” election process will lose its credibility. Without credibility, power holders will find our consent withdrawn.

This manual was prepared from a variety of sources including:

- Judy Alter’s Parallel Election (“PE”) workshop (Oregon, October 2005);
- Judy Alter’s DVD entitled “Parallel Elections: How to Do Them”; See [www.studycaliforniaballots.org](http://www.studycaliforniaballots.org)
- Ellen Brodsky’s, “First ‘Grass Roots’ Parallel Election Project,” a paper written on the PE held in Coconut Grove, FL on March 8, 2005; and
- Reports from Ohio’s PE organizers Jo Anne Karasek and Marj Creech who were joined by others in holding Ohio’s first Parallel Election on August 2, 2005.

It is understood that with each shared experience in conducting parallel elections, a manual such as this will be continually revised. It is hoped that you find the information herein useful and instructive, and that more and more citizens will become involved in this nationwide Parallel Election project. We plan to conduct these Parallel Elections in every election held in the US, until private for-profit corporations are removed from the elections process and until we have confidence in the reported “official” results.



## Items Needed:



1. Two shifts of 3-4 people
2. Canopy or Tent (for inclement weather), umbrellas
3. Table & Chairs for PE workers
4. Food, water and beverages for the PE workers
5. Clear (see-thru) box, slotted at the top, and able to be padlocked; a padlock--two padlocks are better, with the keys (all copies) given to two different persons, not in the same household. If a chain tightly fitted (like a package string) around the box is not available, then one inch masking tape can be used, sealing the lid on. Have the first voter to vote parallel sign across the tape on 2 sides of the box with a permanent marker. Also have 2 parallel workers do the same. (If the tape is removed before the official count, ballots tampered with, and the tape replaced, it will be obvious.)
6. Clipboards & pens (for voters to use when voting)
7. Large Sign affixed to the table or side of tent: **“Citizen-Run Parallel Election”**
8. Roster Book: stitch-bound notebook with lined pages (see details below)
9. Notepad for voters to report election irregularities (see details below)
10. Cell phone for contact with region or state wide PE coordinator
11. Pre-printed ballots that look NOTHING like the official ballots but which contain the date, precinct, all the races, and the voter pledge
12. Voter Pledge displayed prominently (e.g., on an 8x10 standup frame, etc.)
13. Parallel Election information sheets, election-integrity flyers, etc.
14. Volunteer Sign-Up sheets for those citizens wishing to conduct a Parallel Election at some future time.

**SET-UP** at least 100 feet from the polling site. Introduce yourself to the precinct judge and explain what you’re doing.

## **ROSTER BOOK (only use ONE side of each page)**

1. Use a stitch-bound book, preferably with its pages pre-numbered so that it will be obvious if any pages have been removed. If not pre-numbered, go thru and number each sheet (one side only) in ink.
2. On the third sheet, which constitutes the beginning pages where voters sign, begin numbering the lines sequentially, to the last page of the book. (Do not start numbering at the top of each new sheet.)
3. Label the outside of the book with the county, state and date of election, and most importantly, precinct number and city. See below.

**Lucas County, Ohio  
Citizen-Run Parallel Election  
November 8, 2005  
Precinct: Toledo 1E**

4. On the first page, include an affirmation for PE workers to sign before a Notary Public. Below is one suggestion as to wording:

“The undersigned Parallel Election workers, **who are** citizens, do solemnly swear or affirm that they have impartially conducted a Parallel Election, instructing voters, who volunteered to participate, on the mechanics of voting in this system, without in any way trying to influence their vote, except to explain that the Parallel Election system asks voters to vote exactly in the manner they voted in the official election.”

Allow lines for PE workers to print and sign their names. Follow this with a notarial paragraph:

SWORN TO AND SUBSCRIBED before me, a Notary Public in and for the State of Ohio, this \_\_\_\_ day of November, 2005.

\_\_\_\_\_

My commission expires \_\_\_\_\_.

5. On the next page, print the **Voter Pledge**, which the voter must read:

“I am voluntarily participating in this citizen-run Parallel Election.\* I swear or affirm that I am casting the same ballot choices on the Parallel Election ballot as I cast in the (Regular or Special) election of \_\_\_\_\_ County, Ohio on the official ballot on Tuesday, November 8, 2005.

\*I am aware that this Parallel Election ballot is not an official ballot, but will be used to check the accuracy of the official vote count. The official ballots and vote tallies are recorded on Diebold TSx DRE optical scanner voting machines (or insert correct vendor, model number and voting machine type), which are operated with trade-secret (“proprietary”) software not disclosed to the public, not even to public elections officials.”

The above Voter Pledge should also be posted in large type on the PE table, perhaps using a standup 8x10 frame.

6. Voters must **FIRST** sign the Roster Book, **THEN** vote. If the voter refuses to sign, but wants to vote, it is suggested that the PE worker notes in the book “refused to sign.”

## **BALLOT DESIGN**

Parallel election ballots **MUST** differ in appearance from official ballots, but they must contain all the same information such as the precinct info, date, and all the races.

The largest expense of a PE project is the cost of printing the ballots. The July 2005 Parallel Election held in San Diego cost over \$750 and covered 11 precincts (about \$68 per precinct).

## **INFORMATIONAL HAND-OUTS**

Hand out your informational material **AFTER** voters have finished voting. If you are collecting names of future volunteers, do this after they have finished voting, also.

## **THE FIRST PARALLEL VOTER**

Have the first parallel voter witness that the voting box is empty. Seal the box and let the voter drop his or her ballot into it. The voter can then sign a statement to this effect:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, witnessed that the Parallel Election box was empty, then sealed, after which I dropped my vote into the box.

## **PARALLEL ELECTION WORKERS**

**Greeter** – catches the attention of voters leaving the polling place and invites them to vote in the citizen-run parallel election. This person should have talking points ready (we are double checking the results of the machines – don't use the word fraud; don't question the integrity of the poll workers or elections officials).

**Roster Book worker** – explains the sign-in process to voters; has them read the Voter Pledge; makes sure the voter prints his or her name and address and signs on the correct line in the Roster Book.

**Observer** - Makes sure the voter correctly deposits the completed ballot; handles the Reports of Irregularities, protects the envelope containing those reports. This person may later swear by affidavit as to the receipt of such reports from voters.

**Videographer** – Let's video the vote! Absent a camera, this person can assist with any unforeseen issues that may arise, and can assist with greeting and observing; keeps in contact with PE coordinator or media or precinct officials.

## **CLOSING THE POLLS**

After the polls are closed, PE workers must obtain the official results which should be posted at the precinct. Be sure to ask for the results of absentee and provisional votes, as these may not be on the newly printed precinct results.

Interested observers are invited to follow the parallel ballot box to an indoor public location where the ballot box will be opened, the ballots removed and counted. At least two people must observe the ballots at all times (being able to swear to the chain of custody). It is suggested that the ballots are counted twice, rotating the PE workers.

- One calls out the intended vote
- One observes the ballots as called
- One records the vote tallies
- One videographs the entire process.

An audit is then conducted to be sure the vote totals match the number of voters as recorded in the Roster Book.

## **TALKING POINTS**

This is a citizen-run parallel election to double-check the accuracy of the machines (not to double check the accuracy of any person).

This is not a poll; we want ALL voters to participate whereas polls only seek to meet certain demographics. Also, in a poll you openly state your vote whereas in a PE your vote is secret.

Accurately counting the vote ensures democracy; double-checking that count ensures accuracy.

The official ballots and vote tallies are recorded on optical scanners, electronic voting machines, and central tabulators, which are operated with trade-secret software, called proprietary software that is not disclosed to the public, not even to public elections officials.

No public official can demonstrate that our votes are counted as cast when they are counted with secret software.

Hand-counting paper ballots provides a statistical method of analysis that may detect discrepancies between the official reported results and how citizens themselves report how they voted. Parallel Election ballots may also provide legal evidence for a court challenge.