

The Presidential Election and Installation

By George Porter

You are probably wondering how in the world these two things could be in the same article title? It might not be as big a stretch as you think.

First of all, the big problem was standards (or the lack thereof) in the election process. Each voting district in Florida had its own way of doing things (counting ballots) and no one ever required them to thoroughly explain themselves. After all, whose voting districts are these anyway? Their standards were just fine with them and probably very few people cared if some ballots were thrown out from time to time, its normal, so what? I certainly don't know for sure; but I would be willing to bet that occasionally over the years, local candidates in elections asked questions and were confronted by a solid brick wall. No recounts, no dimples, no chad viewing etc., that is the way we do it here, live with it!

This was actually never a big problem until someone really important had something to lose, then the questions about accountability began. One got the impression from all the news reports that they kind of started to make up some stricter standards as the heat from the spotlight intensified. This seemed to get a little ugly after weeks of trying to explain the unexplainable of how elections are run in certain districts. Ballots were probably starting to be counted by touching them to their foreheads in a display of psychic ability, much like Johnny Carson did as "Carnac the Magnificent" in his Tonight Show years back,. Putting "local procedures" in the cold light of day must have made the folks in the election commission a little anxious and embarrassed. It certainly made a bunch of lawyers come alive, and they kicked it into the courts. Everyone knows the rest because it was the only thing on TV for five weeks.

The law has "morphed" a lot in the last few decades. It has come from interpreting laws for the purpose of justice to a sport. The sport has become a blood sport (show me the money). Now the blood sport has become entertainment. How many hours of prime time did this thing take up, not to mention Court TV, Judge "whoever" and lots of books?

When the whole mess got to the Federal Supreme Court, Judge Sandra Day O'Connor asked a question that was so simple that it seemed to sum up the whole problem before it got to be such a tangled mess. She asked "why can't you just count the ballots, why is that so hard"? Good question! Answer?...because there was never a system in place to get it right, the election boards apparently were satisfied with a system that was "a little loose". The subject of reform came up over the years but it made people uncomfortable and it caused trouble. So a couple of hundred votes were messed up from time to time, so what? In the past they probably just threw the ones they couldn't read in the trash, it didn't really matter that much did it? Well... apparently it does.

Now it seems almost a guarantee that there will be federal standards for voting. No more of this goofy dimple stuff. There will be rules and standard procedures for counting ballots so that the cornerstone of democracy, voting, will be done properly. No making it up to suit the local folks,

their budget, or their preferences. This thing is going to be done in a correct and accountable fashion, no more guessing about what this or that ballot means. Clean, clear voting will be demanded by the Federal government and the standards will be uniform and enforced. This is because when the whole nation votes on a president all those votes should be equal and unambiguous. The Feds will see to it because they have preemption over the states in this and they don't want to be embarrassed in the eyes of the world again. They probably wonder whose idea it was to let all these local guys make up all these weird voting procedures anyway, it's just too important.

If you are not thinking about installation yet then you better read this first part again. These guys are us in many ways!

1. We have a national building code, they had a national election.
2. We have local enforcement, they have local enforcement.
3. Our local rules are different from place to place, so are theirs.
4. Some of our local rules simply don't yield good results, obviously theirs don't either.
5. Whenever enough people are hurt by rules or the lack thereof, the preemptive federal government steps in with some new rules. Remember Hurricane Andrew? New wind codes for the whole nation, which happened in Florida too didn't it? Hmmm
6. The new Manufactured Housing Improvement Act just passed and by the time you read this it will probably be law. It says that if you don't have installation standards in five years someone else will give them to you. The election folks will probably have a similar law but they will likely have a lot fewer years to do the job.
7. It is very important to get every manufactured home installed correctly; every vote has to be done correctly too. Both need a clear set of rules that work and have a certain degree of uniformity across the nation.
8. The voting problem was exposed and spotlighted by lawyers and then the courts. Sure hope we can avoid this "blood sport" part, but it seems to be the only way anything gets done these days. Sad, costly, and destructive for everyone.
9. We have been working with partially punched chads for years, but we call it ventilated skirting panels, not ballots. Just take a look at some; you'll see what I mean.
10. All this election trouble could and should have been avoided with responsible planning by caring people. They knew what should have been done but were just not motivated enough. We as an industry can learn from this if we try.