



Is the Cure for Disruption Threat at Iowa Caucuses Worse than the Threat?

An online article by the Associated Press reported on December 19 that the Iowa Republican Party is taking seriously the threat of disrupting the Iowa Caucuses. The article went on to say that the Republican Party is encouraging the use of paper ballots instead of a show of hands, which has traditionally been the norm at many of the caucus sites. This is for the purpose of reconstructing the results, if necessary. It also quoted Ryan Gough, who is in charge of coordinating the caucuses, as declining to release the specific details of the Iowa GOP's security plan in order not to make these details available to any hackers.



The New American contacted the Republican Party of Iowa headquarters. Spokeswoman Nicole Sizemore, assistant communications director for the Republican Party of Iowa, declined to confirm or deny the AP report and also declined to answer any other questions regarding how the caucuses would be handled.

The Threat

The following is a transcript made by the [Des Moines Register](#) of the two-minute statement that is being considered as a threat.

This communication is protected by Anonymous.

The Democratic Party has failed us. The Republican Party has failed us. Both parties are desecrating the American democracy [sic] and committing crimes against humanity on the behalf of American people. Both parties are funded by the same mega-corporations, the same corporations that fund political campaigns, the same corporations that buy lobbyists, the same corporations that operate the United States government.

The primaries and caucuses put on by these parties are part of an elaborate scam that deceives the public into voting for candidates that serve the private interests of the mega-corporations. These parties have deliberately driven tens of millions of people into poverty. Voting for these parties is unethical. They have destroyed the American democracy [sic]. We are calling upon you to occupy the campaign offices of Presidential headquarters in Des Moines, Iowa on December 27th and peacefully shut down the first in the nation Iowa caucuses on January 3rd.

Operation Empire State Rebellion continues. We are Anonymous. We are legion. We do not forgive. We do not forget. Expect us.

A Threat, a Hoax, or a Fizzle?

Only time will tell if this a credible threat, a hoax, or an attempt that will fizzle. We'll know more about



Written by [Kurt Hyde](#) on December 27, 2011

this in the near future, especially on December 27 when we'll see if anyone shows up at the specified locations in Des Moines and how they behave.

Until the Republican Party of Iowa confirms or denies the reactions as reported or issues a statement, the best information we have is what has been reported in the news media. Based on the news accounts, there may be more cause for concern in the reaction than there is in the potential actions that may or may not be attempted by the would-be disrupters.

Why Not Start by Citing Property Rights and Other Constitutional Rights?

Why doesn't the Iowa GOP start by issuing a statement saying something like this? America is a constitutional republic and the Republican Party of Iowa respects the constitutional rights of all individuals. America is the land of freedom of speech and freedom of the press and anyone who believes the political process in America has been corrupted has the right to express such opinions and cite facts that back-up their conclusions. But if the people who appear at campaign offices or the caucuses are not well-behaved, law-abiding citizens, but instead take part in disruptive actions seeking to shut down the perfectly legal and constitutional process of conducting a caucus, they will be asked to leave. If, after being asked to leave, they don't leave, the Iowa GOP will reluctantly but necessarily summon law enforcement to have them removed and possibly arrested for trespassing.

Are Paper Ballots Better Than a Show of Hands for Reconstructing Events at a Caucus?

The Associated Press website of December 19 at 6:28 PM EST said: "The GOP is also encouraging the party activists who run the precinct votes to use paper ballots instead of a show of hands, which has been the practice in some areas. The ballots would provide a backup in the event of any later confusion about the results."

What could be better for preventing confusion than the traditional process of a show of hands, an open public counting, and an opportunity right then and there to recount or challenge? Even more frightening, the statement regarding paper ballots doesn't include assurances that the paper ballots would be counted on the premises, in public, immediately after the ballots are collected, and with an opportunity for representatives of the candidates to challenge.

The New American has contacted a participant in the 2008 Democratic Party caucuses in Boise, Idaho. She described how the paper ballots were collected and then the caucus went on to other business while the ballots were counted somewhere else. The results of the vote count were announced to the assembly after a short while. What is significant is that there was no public announcement ahead of time that the ballots would be transported elsewhere to be counted. It was just done and only people such as she, with an attention to detail, even took notice of the significance of this. There were no objections raised regarding the results of the vote count. What is troublesome is not the results of that specific vote count, but rather the process.

As far as reconstructing the results of the caucuses is concerned, paper ballots aren't required. In fact, they are a potential weakness because someone with access to the ballot boxes might tamper with them in a manner similar to that of Ballot Box 13 in 1948 in Texas. All that is really needed to reconstruct the individual caucus subtotals is to encourage the use of video cameras at each caucus site to make a record of the final announcement of the vote totals by the caucus chair and encourage representatives of each candidate's campaign to be introduced by name and be part of that video recording.

If there is any fear that the centralized computer that accumulates the totals from the caucuses might be hacked, all that is needed is to establish a manual backup system with telephone numbers and



backup telephone numbers that can be used to verify or, if necessary, replace the computer feeds.

Security Via Obscurity

While there is value in keeping a few of the security plans under wraps, the overall rules of the caucuses should not be kept secret. In the interest of genuine security, the procedures for voting, counting the votes, and ensuring that the caucus attendees can witness as their votes are counted should be clearly communicated to all involved well before the caucuses. That will enable the attendees to be informed of the correct procedures and immediately detect any attempts at hanky-panky.

If there is any belief on the part of the caucus attendees that there will be authorized secret procedures regarding casting or counting their votes at the caucuses, what is there to stop a dishonest caucus chairman from falsely asserting that he has received the following "secret security plan" from party headquarters and all must comply?

- All recording devices must be turned off.
- In the interest of being able to reconstruct the caucus totals, we are going to use paper ballots.
- After being cast, the ballots will be transported to a secure location for counting.
- As soon as the ballots are counted, we will all be informed of the results.
- If anyone objects, he will be determined to be a disruptor, ruled out of order, and subject to arrest.

This would be another example of why the majority of computer professionals consider Security Via Obscurity to be a myth. It also exposes additional dangers to a free society when there is secrecy of processes. It breeds gullibility and blind obedience amongst the citizens.

An Excuse to Employ Police State Measures?

This threat, no matter how credible, will hopefully not serve as an excuse to employ such police state measures as police control points at the caucuses. It is perfectly fine to have police available if they are needed to enforce laws, but hopefully not to be used for treating law-abiding citizens as subjects, forcing people to empty their pockets and herding them like cattle through magnetometers or police control point devices as a prerequisite for participation in the political process.

Honest Vote Count Initiative

Fortunately, there's no need to employ unconstitutional, police-state measures or use secrecy of caucus procedures. Here's a suggested initiative to be adopted prior to the caucuses begin or, if necessary, to be adopted as the first order of business at the caucuses:

In order to protect the Iowa Caucuses from electoral fraud and from being disrupted by external organizations, we adopt the following security procedures:

- If this caucus location has traditionally used a show of hands for voting, that will be the primary method for the 2012 caucus as well.
- If this caucus decides to vote via paper ballots, the ballots must not be removed from the premises until after they have been counted in public immediately after being cast, in the presence of the people who cast them, and with an opportunity for representatives of the candidates to challenge.
- There will be no restrictions on the use of video or audio recording devices. In order to reconstruct caucus results if such reconstruction becomes necessary, video and audio recording of the final announcements of the vote totals by as many people as possible will be encouraged.



Written by [Kurt Hyde](#) on December 27, 2011

Conclusion

This is a good time to take a lesson from New Hampshire, the state with the safest elections from fraud. In New Hampshire, there are no secret procedures. Just don't violate the voters' secret ballots. The voters and caucus attendees of Iowa deserve nothing less.

References:

[Security Through Obscurity](#)

[Iowa Caucus 2012: State GOP Worried About Hacker Threat](#)



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