

September 16, 2004

## The Return of Katherine Harris

**E**very state has an obligation to run elections that are not only fair, but also appear fair to the average voter. After the debacle of 2000, Florida's officials should understand this better than anyone. But its top elections officer, Glenda Hood, is acting in ways that create a strong impression that she is manipulating the rules to help re-elect her boss's brother. After her maneuvers this week to try to put Ralph Nader on the ballot, she cannot be trusted to run an impartial election.

In Florida's 2000 election mess, Katherine Harris served simultaneously as Florida's secretary of state and as co-chairwoman of the state's Bush-Cheney campaign committee. In her official capacity, she repeatedly took actions that favored the campaign. This year has turned out to be more of the same. When Gov. Jeb Bush appointed Ms. Hood as secretary of state, he chose someone with a history of partisanship, as a Republican officeholder and as a Bush-Cheney elector in 2000. Now Ms. Hood's politics appear to be influencing her election duties.

She recently conducted a highly suspect voting-roll purge of felons. The voters who were to be taken off the list included more than 22,000 African-Americans, who generally vote heavily Democratic, but just 61 Hispanics, who tend to favor Republicans in Florida. She was forced to scrap the list.

In last month's primary, some people without photo identification were turned away without being told that they could vote if they signed affidavits affirming their identities. After the same thing happened in South Dakota this year, the Board of Elections there told every polling place to post signs advising people of their rights. Ms. Hood's office insists that voters need not be told of the affidavit option. Voter ID is often a partisan issue because poor people and members of other groups that are less likely to have identification often vote Democratic.

Most recently, Ms. Hood has played a suspect role in helping Mr. Nader get on Florida's ballot, where he would be likely to weaken John Kerry. A court has ruled against Mr. Nader's claim to have met the requirements to be on the ballot.

Last night, the state was again involved in suits and countersuits over a presidential election in Florida. Ms. Hood's role has been a disturbing one. Instead of waiting as an impartial bystander for the court's direction, she seems to be trying to thwart any ruling that would take Mr. Nader off the ballot. At one point, while the court ruling eliminating Mr. Nader was under appeal, Ms. Hood's office hurriedly directed every county to add Mr. Nader's name to the ballots that will soon be sent to overseas voters.

Granting legitimate candidates access to ballots is important, but officials should obey the law. Ms. Hood had no right to try to proceed with her own preferred outcome. It is hard to believe that she would have done the same thing if the candidate had been one likely to hurt President Bush.

The nation cannot afford another tainted election. Governor Bush should quickly find an elections professional or academic of unquestioned neutrality to run Florida's elections.

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