

## The History of Raffensperger & Barrow on Election Issues

*Author: John Fortuin is a Georgia citizen with 20-years experience as a computer programmer and analyst. Fortuin is co-founder of Defenders of Democracy, which for over fourteen years has advocated for fair and auditable elections. In 2018, the Green Party nominated John Fortuin for State Senate District 46, where he ran as a write-in candidate.*

Let's review the historical positions of these candidates on election issues. The new Secretary of State will be expected to replace Georgia's vulnerable 16-year-old voting system with a new system, and one would hope these candidates cared enough about election accuracy to set meaningful standards for protecting the integrity of every vote cast.

Yet the talking points used by Raffensperger & Barrow in discussion about the need for new voting equipment are opaque to all but a few elections advocates, and partisanship and gamesmanship has been interjected into the race in a manner that obfuscates, instead of providing a fact-based discussion of what constitutes appropriate voting technology.

However, the nuanced language used by the two candidates show that one candidate is following the standards set by the computer science community, and the other has adopted the language of the voting system lobbyists. The lobbyists want to sell expensive Ballot-Marking-Devices<sup>1</sup>, (BMDs) to the state. BMDs are computers that function as overpriced pens, doing the job of filling-in a paper ballot with darkened circles next to a selected candidate's name. Voting System lobbyists hope to sell 120 million dollars of BMDs to Georgia to deliver themselves a giant paycheck. If Georgia follows the lobbyist's recommendations, Georgia will have the most expensive voting system in the United States, but it will not be a secure voting system. BMD computers can be rigged to throw an election, by printing a voter's selection in plain text, but coding a vote for the opposing candidate in a bar code, or other non-human readable computer code on the ballot.

### The Candidates:

#### John Barrow:

John Barrow has been meeting with election integrity advocates following a science and security agenda since at least 2006, when the author, together with other science-based advocates, met Barrow in his congressional office in Washington DC. In 2006, Barrow was a co-sponsor of H.R. 811, a bill that addressed some of the problems of computerized voting systems. Barrow has continued to follow the science and security agenda for elections through the present day. Let's review a snippet of Barrow's recent AJC article:

*“we’re long overdue for a new and improved way of casting our votes. You can’t say that our votes are counted exactly as we cast them if they are recorded on an electronic medium that cannot be read by the voter or by those charged with counting the votes, much less recounting the votes. I was the first, and now I’m the only, candidate for Secretary of State to call the decertification of our current machines in favor of hand-marked paper ballots and optical scanners in our elections. That’s the gold standard of reliability and security, that’s what other states are doing, and that’s what we should be doing<sup>2</sup>.”*

---

1 John Fortuin, November 14, 2018, “Brian Kemp: Like his Democratic Predecessors, Suppressing Ballot Integrity and the Legitimacy of Georgia’s Elections” page 8, [http://www.fortuinforgeorgia.com/sites/default/files/2018-11/Brian\\_Kemp\\_Suppressing\\_Ballot\\_Integrity\\_20181114.pdf](http://www.fortuinforgeorgia.com/sites/default/files/2018-11/Brian_Kemp_Suppressing_Ballot_Integrity_20181114.pdf)

2John Barrow, 11/16/2018. [https://www.myajc.com/news/opinion/opinion-safeguard-access-security-democracy-sacred-rite/gYC0KKxF9NJRvYmHPLDcK/?fbclid=IwAR1ERVWdwXNBz956bVgY-ohStyJoiTQji9dYFtH2Lyck3D6cx4KsPgJ\\_Xs](https://www.myajc.com/news/opinion/opinion-safeguard-access-security-democracy-sacred-rite/gYC0KKxF9NJRvYmHPLDcK/?fbclid=IwAR1ERVWdwXNBz956bVgY-ohStyJoiTQji9dYFtH2Lyck3D6cx4KsPgJ_Xs)

Barrow wants to switch voting systems from the current model, which should have been decertified in 2007 (as California<sup>3</sup> did) to “*hand-marked paper ballots and optical scanners in our elections. That’s the gold standard of reliability and security*”

Barrow's language is clear, following the science and security based approach of the 2018 National Academies of Sciences' report “*Securing the Vote: Protecting American Democracy*”<sup>4</sup>. Barrow's adoption of the “gold standard” language above is a restatement of a computer science and computer security proven position, and not a partisan position.

### **Brad Raffensperger:**

I met Brad Raffensperger following a speech he made in early 2018. I praised his career in engineering and stated Georgia's Secretary of State's office had failed to apply science-based standards to Georgia's voting systems, and I hoped he would adopt a non-partisan, science-based approach to reforming Georgia's voting system. His response surprised me: “What are you, a Democrat?” I had hoped to further discuss technical aspects of Georgia's broken voting system with him, but Raffensperger's perspective that voting technology was a partisan issue was contrary to my experience working with all parties since 2004, when then-State Senator Tom Price asked me to testify before a State Senate Committee on technical issues to reform Georgia's voting system.

More disturbing than this personal encounter is the language Raffensperger used in his AJC opinion piece<sup>5</sup>. Raffensperger's disparaging comments regarding Barrow's adoption of the scientific community's “*gold standard*” of “*hand-marked paper ballots and optical scanners*”, indicates Raffensperger has fallen under the influence of the voting system lobbyists. The lobbyists' dream sale is to replace each of Georgia's 27,000 voting computers with an expensive BMD computer, an unnecessary 120 million dollar sale which Brian Kemp's “SAFE commission” is rigged to endorse<sup>6</sup>. The “gold standard” solution of “*hand-marked paper ballots and optical scanners*” directs the state to acquire as little as 30 million dollars of voting equipment, a much smaller sale for lobbyists, and hand-marked paper ballots and optical scanners would make computerized election fraud easy to detect and prosecute.

Raffensperger's attempt to discredit the scientific community's “gold-standard” voting method only serves to enrich those lobbyists and deliver BMDs that would provide a technological smoke screen to falsely reassure voters that the security vulnerabilities of computerized voting systems have been resolved.

### **Conclusion:**

Based on my 14 years of experience in the field of computerized voting systems, I find Raffensperger's positions against hand-marked paper ballots and optical scanners a threat to our democratic republic. Please vote today, and cast your vote against Brad Raffensperger.

---

3 Debra Bowen, 8/06/2007. *California Decertifies Voting Machines, Conditions Applied for Use* <http://www.govtech.com/security/California-Decertifies-Voting-Machines-Conditions-Applied.html>

4 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2018. *Securing the Vote: Protecting American Democracy*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25120>.

5 Brad Raffensperger, 11/17/18. <https://www.myajc.com/news/opinion/opinion-needs-fair-open-accurate-secure-elections/xCMoIw0E1XgS9N2RQ6ri4J/>

6 John Fortuin, November 14, 2018, “*Brian Kemp: Like his Democratic Predecessors, Suppressing Ballot Integrity and the Legitimacy of Georgia's Elections*” page 10, [http://www.fortuinforgeorgia.com/sites/default/files/2018-11/Brian\\_Kemp\\_Suppressing\\_Ballot\\_Integrity\\_20181114.pdf](http://www.fortuinforgeorgia.com/sites/default/files/2018-11/Brian_Kemp_Suppressing_Ballot_Integrity_20181114.pdf)

