Open Letter from Ion Sancho, Leon Co. Florida Election Supervisor

(Excerpts from ElectionDefenseAlliance.org, June 2006)

Dear friends,

As Supervisor of Elections for Leon County, Florida (Tallahassee), I've seen our democratic voting process mishandled and manhandled by a few elected officials more committed to winning office than to democracy.

No major news reporter has worked as doggedly to expose this story than Greg Palast whose reports for BBC first laid bare, for example, the purge of innocent Florida voters as "felons" before the 2000 election. Palast has just released a new book, Armed Madhouse, with the provocative subtitle: The Scheme to Steal '08 and other Dispatches from the Front Lines of the Class War..... The chapter on manipulations of the 2004 vote and the threat to fair elections in 2008 is simply must-read information.

I may be prejudiced: I play a role in the book. In late 2004, Palast's BBC crew asked me to look at lists of African-American voters obtained from Republican campaign headquarters files. There were thousands of names and addresses -- including page after page of soldiers shipped overseas. It turned out, as I suspected, that this was a "challenge" list (Palast found 70,000 names in Florida alone) -- meant to prevent these citizens from voting. These voters, Palast was told by the GOP's spokeswoman, had suspect addresses. First class letters, marked "Do not Forward," were mailed to these voters and the returned letters were to become the basis of a challenge -- including the returned letters of soldiers shipped to Iraq.

There were other games. Palast includes a scam against college-age voters -- who thought that they were signing petitions in favor of allowing the medical use of marijuana. Their signatures were then copied, forged onto registration documents and the victims -- including my own step-daughter -- found themselves registered as Republicans. Worse, because they were now registered in two places, they could have lost their vote altogether.

Palast notes that official figures show the "uncounted" vote (spoilage and rejected ballots) in the USA reaching 3.6 million in 2004. It could be 5 million 2008. And the games are already going into play during this 2006 midterm election cycle.

Palast's prose is highly charged -- and highly funny -- but nonetheless astonishing in its important revelations...The book is non-partisan, taking a tough, and often hilarious look at politicians of both parties. Most important, he gives us facts for action. Our right to vote, and our right to know when it's threatened, is a non-partisan issue...

Ion Sancho