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## Returns Are In: Software Goofed

### Lake County tally misled 15 hopefuls

By Susan Kuczka  
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April 4, 2003

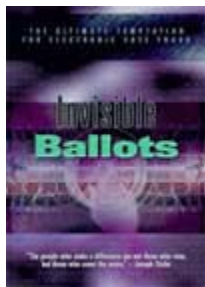
A computer glitch at the Lake County clerk's office during Tuesday's election caused some results to be tallied incorrectly, which meant some candidates went to bed thinking they were winners but woke up losers.

"It was like being queen for a day--but only for 12 hours," said Richard Miholic, a losing Republican candidate for alderman in Waukegan, who was among 15 people in four races affected by the foul-up.

The problem was caused by a programming error that failed to account for "no candidate" listings in some races on the ballot, Clerk Willard Helander said Thursday. As a result, election results were placed next to the names of the wrong candidates in four different races, including in Waukegan's 9th Ward.

Incorrect results also were tabulated in races for the Libertyville Community High School District 128 Board, the North Chicago Community Unit District 187 Board and the Foss Park District Board in North Chicago.

The clerk's office corrected the problem shortly after 10 p.m. on election night. But by then, many people who had kept track of the results on the clerk's online Web site believed the unofficial results were complete.



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Miholic, 53, had gone to a Republican Party gathering at the Madison Avenue Restaurant in Waukegan, where a computer was set up to watch the election returns.

"I had all sorts of people congratulating me that night," said Miholic, a retired real estate executive. "I felt great until about 2 p.m. [Wednesday] when I got a call from the clerk's office informing me I didn't win. I couldn't believe it."

Democrat Rafael Rivera, the actual victor in Waukegan's 9th Ward, said he turned in for the night knowing he had won because he logged in to the clerk's Web site after the election results were corrected.

But for several hours, Rivera said he felt as if he were living an episode of "The Twilight Zone."

"It felt like a nightmare," he said. "I knew something was wrong because when I looked up the results in my own precinct it showed zero votes. I said, 'Wait a minute. I know I voted for myself.' So I knew something was wrong."

Helander blamed the problem on Election Systems & Software, the Omaha company in charge of operating the county's optical-scan voting machines.

She said a company official told her the programmers were unaware the county would have "no candidate" listings on its ballot.

"Once they knew what the problem was, it was very simple to correct it," she said.

The county has no plans to end its business relationship with the Nebraska firm despite the mistake, she said. Efforts to reach company officials for comment Thursday were unsuccessful.

"We think the world of the liaison who works with us, but the guys in the software department need a lesson in communications," she said.

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Helander acknowledged the problem had caused anguish for many candidates.

" It turned out not to be the end of the world, but for the people who went to bed thinking they had won only to find out they had lost it was very devastating," she said.

Miholic said he plans to visit the clerk's office Friday to ask for an additional explanation of the error--and to make sure the final unofficial results posted on the clerk's Web site are correct.

" With all the problems elections have had with ballots, especially the [2000] presidential election, you'd think these glitches would be taken care of," he said.

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