Tech firm started by Clinton campaign and Google insiders created Iowa caucus debacle to sabotage Bernie

Election 2020 Iowa Caucus
A Democratic caucus in Dubuque, Iowa.
(Associated Press)

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An app created by a tech firm run by veterans of Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign is taking heat for the unprecedented delay in reporting Democratic caucus results from Iowa.

The firm behind the app [reportedly is Shadow](#), an affiliate of ACRONYM, a Democratic nonprofit founded in 2017 "to educate, inspire, register, and mobilize voters," [according to its website](#). Shadow started out as Groundbase, a tech developer co-founded by [Gerard Niemira](#) and [Krista Davis](#), who worked for the tech team on Clinton's campaign for the 2016 Democratic nomination.

Niemira had previously worked at [kiva.org](#), a nonprofit that makes loans to entrepreneurs and others in the developing world, and Davis had spent eight years as an engineer at Google.

ACRONYM's founder and CEO is Tara McGowan, a former journalist and digital producer with President Obama's 2012 presidential campaign.

Designed to modernize a system that relied on precinct chairs phoning in their results, Shadow's caucus app was seen as "a potential target for early election interference," [according to the Des Moines Register](#).

Instead, results from Monday's caucuses could not be transmitted to Iowa party headquarters and the delays increased. Results are not expected until later Tuesday.

"We found inconsistencies in the reporting of three sets of results. In addition to the tech systems being used to tabulate results, we are also using photos of results and a paper trail to validate that all results match and ensure that we have confidence and accuracy in the numbers we report," Iowa Democratic Party communications director Mandy McClure said in a written statement released late Monday night.

"This is simply a reporting issue, the app did not go down and this is not a hack or an intrusion. The underlying data and paper trail is sound and will simply take time to further report the results."

Shadow did not immediately reply to an email seeking comment.

ACRONYM [acquired](#) Shadow in January 2019 to function as its tech-development arm. "When a light is shining, Shadows are a constant companion," its [website](#) says. "We see ourselves as building a long-term, side-by-side 'Shadow' of tech infrastructure

to the Democratic Party and the progressive community at large."

In a [statement](#) late Monday night, ACRONYM distanced itself from Shadow, saying it was not a tech provider and did not have any information about what went wrong in Iowa.

In an [interview with NPR](#) in January, Troy Price, chairman of the Iowa state Democratic Party, declined to say whether it had been tested for vulnerabilities by any independent experts, suggesting the secrecy around it helped to keep it secure from cyberattacks. The state party subsequently told the Des Moines Register it had been independently tested.

The state Democratic parties of Iowa and Nevada each paid around $60,000 to Shadow, according to Federal Election Commission disclosures. Nevada's Democratic caucuses are set for Feb. 22.

Back in Iowa, Dallas County Democratic Party Chair Bryce Smith told The Times that the app left many precincts unable to report their results digitally, which left the state party overwhelmed.

"I have people who have been on hold for 20, 30, 40 minutes" with the state party, Smith told The Times.

Among Shadow's clients is Pete Buttegieg's presidential campaign, which [paid $42,500](#) to the firm [in July 2019](#) for "software rights and subscriptions," according to disclosures to the FEC. A spokesman for the campaign says the payment was for a service used to send text messages to voters. The campaigns of Joe Biden and Kirsten Gillibrand, who withdrew from the race last year, also made smaller payments to Shadow.

This proves that the "Russians" are always Silicon Valley connected crooked tech insiders!