

TO: The Honorable Charlie Crist, Governor of Florida
The Honorable Kurt Browning, Florida Secretary of State

FROM: The Florida Supervisors of Election Listed on Page 3*

DATE: April 10, 2007

RE: *Our Position on Proposals to Change Florida's Voting Systems*

As a collaborative effort, the Supervisors of Elections of the 15 Florida counties that employ touch screen voting technology for early voting and election day have prepared this memorandum to present some of our concerns regarding your proposed changes to the state's voting systems for the 2008 Primary and General Election.

The vast majority of voters who comment on touch screen voting are satisfied with their ease of use and are confident that they accurately record their votes. The Collins Center for Public Policy and Dr. Susan McManus, Political Science Professor at the University of South Florida, surveyed Florida voters to determine if they were satisfied with their voting experience in the 2006 General Election. The result: "Florida's voters are giving high marks to their local election supervisors, poll workers, and the new voting technology that has been put in place statewide," Dr. McManus said. When asked how to improve the voting experience, 73 percent of those surveyed said they liked the process as is, and no changes were needed. Only 5.2 percent said they would like a paper trail.

Governor Crist, we recognize your commitment to improving voter confidence in the state's election process, and we are not opposed to a voter-verifiable paper audit trail. We are very concerned, however, that issues not addressed in your proposal may have an adverse effect on elections.

Our major concerns include the following:

- ***Timelines for implementation***

Any change requires a period of study and a plan of action to ensure that the changes will indeed have the effect for which they are designed. A hastily proposed and enacted change in our voting systems that results in problems during the 2008 presidential election cycle will have a negative effect on voter confidence nationwide.

The availability of the new voting equipment to meet the deadlines set for the 2008 election cycle is uncertain. For example, optical scanners required to meet federal multi-language requirements have not been certified (for some of the vendors) and, therefore, have not yet been manufactured.

As we considered your proposal, we began setting forth timelines to accomplish the task of changing our voting technology. Although September 2008 may seem like a long time from now, it is not. Even if we implement the plan in the fall of 2008, we would still need time to have the equipment tested, certified and manufactured. The next step would be training election staff, thousands of poll workers and our voters to use the new system prior to election day.

- ***Cost for implementation***

If proposed state legislation passes regarding property taxes, this will greatly impact the funding of county government operations. That leaves us trapped between being expected to limit our budget requests and a state mandate to spend millions on a new voting system that only a few voters are demanding.

- ***Federal legislation***

We are watching several congressional bills very closely that we feel will impact our elections. We do not know if voting systems in Florida will conflict with Federal requirements now being considered by the House and Senate. If our state reacts too quickly, will we risk being out of compliance with federal statutes and, therefore, ineligible to receive federal funds? This could increase the financial strain on counties as they work to implement yet another new voting system.

- ***Ballot-on-demand printers at early voting sites***

This concept has been tested in only a few jurisdictions in which 50 percent of the voters vote by absentee ballots. The printers are limited in the number of ballots they can produce per hour, so each voting site would require multiple printers to accommodate a strong voter turnout. In addition, the current optical scanners can count only a limited number of ballot styles, so multiple scanners would be needed at each early voting site. Voter dissatisfaction will definitely increase if these limitations make voting times longer. Based on high early voter turnout during recent election cycles, this is almost guaranteed.

Voting activists demanding “paper trails” like to say that we Supervisors of Elections are averse to change. That is not the case. We have experienced more reform in the past six years than in the 100 years prior to 2000. We support change if it comes with a tangible benefit for the electoral process and improves voter confidence. A reasoned, practical approach takes into account the costs and time needed for implementation and seems a more viable alternative.

We have voiced some of our concerns in this paper and would like to propose three alternatives for your consideration:

- ***An effective date of January 2010 instead of 2008 for all voting system changes***
 - This will provide more time to gauge any federal legislative changes and to test new equipment and technologies.
- ***Pilot projects in selected voting jurisdictions during the 2008 election cycle***
 - Results from the pilot programs would be analyzed to implement systemwide changes in 2010. Change would be introduced in a fiscally responsible manner without scrapping an entire voting system.
- ***Continue using touch screen voting systems for both early voting and election day with the addition of VVPAT***
 - Poll workers and voters are already familiar with this technology, and only the VVPAT process will change. This will allow us to continue using the current technology with minimal additional costs.

In conclusion, Governor Crist, we would like to reiterate that we share your commitment to giving our voters confidence in the process. Our mission is to have fair, honest and accurate elections in our state. We are submitting our concerns and proposals to you with the hope that you carefully consider every aspect of this plan. A positive voting experience is the right of every Floridian, no matter which system we employ.

*15 Counties Using Touch Screen Machines at Early Voting Sites and Election Day:

The Honorable Brenda Snipes, Broward County Supervisor of Elections
 The Honorable Mac Horton, Charlotte County Supervisor of Elections
 The Honorable Jennifer Edwards, Collier County Supervisor of Elections
 The Honorable Buddy Johnson, Hillsborough County Supervisor of Elections
 The Honorable Kay Clem, Indian River County Supervisor of Elections
 The Honorable Emogene Stegall, Lake County Supervisor of Elections
 The Honorable Sharon Harrington, Lee County Supervisor of Elections
 The Honorable Lester Sola, Miami-Dade County Supervisor of Elections
 The Honorable Vicki Cannon, Nassau County Supervisor of Elections
 The Honorable Arthur Anderson, Palm Beach County Supervisor of Elections
 The Honorable Brian Corley, Pasco County Supervisor of Elections
 The Honorable Deborah Clark, Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections
 The Honorable Kathy Dent, Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections
 The Honorable Karen Krauss, Sumter County Supervisor of Elections