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Election threats can be addressed

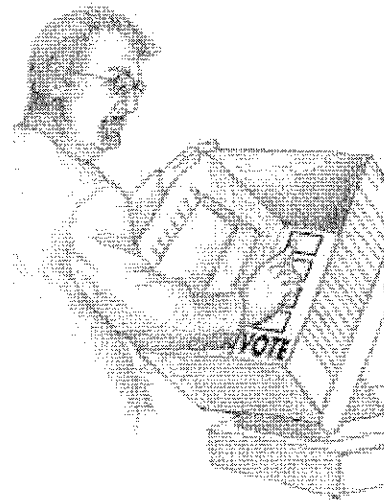
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After reviewing the report from Ohio's recently concluded review of voting systems, one has to be struck with the differences between the findings in the report vs. the secretary of state's recommendations. In fact, one has to wonder, did Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner read the report?

In just a snippet of the technical-details report for one manufacturer, of the 19 high-risk areas for voting-system integrity, all of them can be mitigated with procedural controls, precinct records and simple additional guidance from the secretary of state's office. Rather than embracing the notion that all voting systems, paper and electronic, have certain levels of risk associated with them, Brunner has attempted to portray all of the electronic systems as wholly inadequate. When the ability of a state election official to certify an election is based upon the results from the local boards of elections, one has to wonder why the local elections officials, who actually conduct elections, weren't more involved in the review of the findings prior to their release.

Brunner's recommendation for central-count, optical-scan systems for the entire state also raises more questions than answers, as this system also will rely upon strong procedural controls by local elections officials. When central-count, optical-scan technology debuted 40 years ago, it was a great addition to the elections environment, but it certainly has its own limitations, given the complexities of elections today. In fact, some of the very risks identified within her report will not be addressed with the use of centrally counted, optical-scan ballots, nor will Ohio voters be able to benefit from the provisions under the Help America Vote Act. Electronic voting systems still represent the greatest potential for addressing new legislative requirements such as vote centers, minority-language access and the ability for voters with disabilities to cast an independent ballot.

There is a time to lead when it comes to technology and public service. The report actually speaks to the need for strengthening local elections procedures in order to balance the dual needs of prevention and detection. The integrity of elections comes down to a series of processes and procedures administered by each county, combined with the technology and



WEB-ONLY LETTERS

- * These letters to the editor didn't make it to print. That doesn't mean you shouldn't read them.

its established procedures. For every identifiable risk, there is a clear step to take for protecting each Ohioan's vote. The challenge is whether Brunner will recognize the opportunity to lead an effort to address the threats identified with real-world solutions or will, instead, sacrifice technology upon the altar of preconceived opinion.

The decision to scrap current technology appears to be a waste of public dollars based upon threats that are speculative and that have never occurred in a real-world election. One must hope that while the industry responds to Brunner's effort, and local elections officials work diligently to conduct the 2008 elections, the voters of Ohio do not end up suffering by having to watch another presidential election come down to 36 days of discerning voter intent from paper.

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Working Together for Secure and Accurate Elections

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For Immediate Release

ELECTION TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL: RECENT POLLING CONFIRMS

VOTER CONFIDENCE REMAINS STEADY

Houston, TX - August 24, 2007 - Polling Data released yesterday by the Field Research Corporation shows that voters remain confident with the accuracy of the voting process.

Approximately 82% of California respondents in the new poll express confidence in the accuracy of the vote counting process. Given the recent actions by the California Secretary of State to decertify electronic voting systems based on findings from a review process with questionable methodology that did not take into account the many security procedures and processes employed by California's election officials, it is striking that the overwhelming majority of respondents remain confident in the voting process.

The latest polling data are a reflection of a steady confidence level of voters over the past few years. In 2004, a CNN poll registered voter confidence at a level of 89%¹. In 2006, the Pew Research Institute revealed a confidence level of 87%². In 2006, the Collins Center for Public Policy issued survey data for the State of Florida reflecting an overall confidence level of 85% from 2002 through 2006³.

Also this week, researchers from the University of New Mexico, Caltech/MIT Voting Technology Project and University of Utah released polling data from the November 2006 election in Colorado and New Mexico suggesting a voter confidence level of 86 and 82% respectively⁴.

All of these findings reveal a steady trend of voter confidence in the vote tabulation and counting process. Michelle Shafer, Chairperson of the Election Technology Council, had this to say regarding this trend, "There is clear evidence now that voters are comfortable with the voting systems currently deployed whether they are paper-based voting systems or electronic voting systems. The

¹ <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2004/pages/results/states/CA/P/00/epolls.0.html>

² <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=291>

³ http://www.collinscenter.org/usr_doc/2006_Vot_Sat_Doc.pdf

⁴ <http://vote2006.unm.edu/NMsummary.htm>

industry certainly understands the perceptions that continue to persist, but it is clearly evident that the data continues to point to these concerns as being from a vocal minority and not an issue plaguing America as some would suggest. We must continue to move forward and work together – election officials, election technology providers, the academic community, voting reform advocates and voters – to improve voter confidence through pollworker training, voter education, enhanced election procedures, the continuous evolution of voting technology and constructive dialogue”

David Beirne, Executive Director for the Election Technology Council, had this to say, “Despite continuing attempts to drive fear into voters regarding electronic voting systems, voters understand that new technologies are a part of their daily lives. To discount the many benefits of electronic voting systems – accessibility, accuracy, security, redundancy in data storage, durability, auditability, multilingual capacity, etc. -is an insult to the public as they understand that improvements can be made without jeopardizing forward progress. It is a laudable goal to pursue a higher level of voter confidence, and our industry is, has been and always will be committed to this endeavor.”

A copy of this report by the Field Research Corporation can be downloaded at <http://www.field.com/fieldpollonline/subscribers/RIs2240.pdf>.

About the Election Technology Council (www.electiontech.org)

The Election Technology Council (ETC) consists of companies that offer voting system technology hardware products, software and services to support the electoral process. The ETC represents manufacturers of the voting equipment used by over 90% of the population in the United States. These companies have organized as an industry trade association to work together to address common issues facing the industry. Membership in the ETC is open to any company in the election systems marketplace. Current members of the Election Technology Council include Advanced Voting Systems, Election Systems & Software, Hart InterCivic, Premier Election Solutions and Sequoia Voting Systems.

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Working Together for Secure and Accurate Elections

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Safeguarding the Vote: Applying Best Practices to Mitigate Perceived Threats for Voting Systems

Overview:

Over the last few years, a number of procedures have been adopted by local jurisdictions to respond to perceived and potential threats to electronic voting systems. Regardless of the platform, there are a number of procedures that may be put into place by a local jurisdiction to respond to public concerns and reflect a proactive approach. As part of the Election Technology Council's continuing objective to serve as a resource for election officials, this document is designed to outline the perceived threats, mitigation strategies for these threats and some key procedures for the benefit of your jurisdiction and voter confidence.

Key Steps for Pre-Election Setup:

Below are a few key steps that each jurisdiction may take to establish that your voting equipment is operating as it should, is properly certified, and documents each step of the election definition process (process/time period):

Acceptance Testing (conduct upon receipt of equipment/continuous): Upon acceptance of your voting equipment, verify that the components specified in both the software and hardware versions match those currently certified within your State. In addition, verify the basic functionality of the equipment by conducting a series of response tests so the all components are operating as they should. The United States Election Assistance Commission recently issued a "Quick Start Guide" on this very issue which can be found at www.eac.gov.

Establish Clear Custody Controls (continuous): Inventory tracking systems, ranging from the use of bar coding and a simple database to a more robust product provided by a service provider, can be a critical component to your success. These tracking systems provide documentation on the specific chain of events associated with your voting equipment and provide an efficient means of accounting for all of your voting units. The use of tracking systems should be incorporated into all facets of your voting system including the physical voting units, memory cards, and ballot activation devices.

Pre-Election Hash Code Testing (conduct upon receipt of equipment and/or prior to establishing your election definitions and your absentee ballot programming): Hash Code testing is a valuable tool for use during the period of acceptance as well as for just prior to establishing your election definitions. More information on hash code testing and its software application is available directly from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and its National Software Resource Library (NSRL). Trusted copies of software applications and firmware are also available from the Independent Testing Authority (ITA) that tested the voting system or system component. Hash code testing is a software application which verifies that the software incorporated within your jurisdiction is exactly the same as submitted during the federal certification process; it provides an extremely high level of assurance that the software has not been modified or altered in any way. For more instructions, visit





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For Immediate Release

**ELECTION TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL RELEASES INDUSTRY GUIDELINES FOR
SAFEGUARDING THE 2008 ELECTION CYCLE**

Houston, TX – January 9, 2008 –

The Election Technology Council today announced the release of industry guidelines outlining best practices for election officials to adopt in response to potential and perceived threats to electronic voting systems. In releasing the guidelines, David Beirne, Executive Director of the Election Technology Council, said, "The Council recognizes that no voting technology is invulnerable, and as with other types of voting systems, it is critical for election administrators around the country to build robust procedures for safeguarding the use of electronic voting systems. Misconceptions concerning the operation of electronic voting systems, if left unanswered, can have a corrosive effect on voter confidence if they are not taken seriously and addressed with clear, factual information."

The published guidelines from the Election Technology Council highlight common practices that county and state election officials can adopt leading up to, during, and after Election Day. If adopted in their entirety, these procedures will provide clear evidence of the integrity of their voting systems and will assist in documenting the accuracy and validity of the election results. The guidelines list the most common perceived threats and provide clear mitigation strategies for each.

The integrity of all elections is dependent upon clear procedures to identify potential threats and detect them after an election is completed. Detection is the critical component when verifying the integrity of an election. This is true in both the use of voting technologies and during the exercise of the voting process at the polling place.

Many of these best practices have already been adopted by various jurisdictions. With the release of these new guidelines, the Council offers a comprehensive framework for jurisdictions to apply, determining those procedures which best suit their needs during the 2008 Presidential Election Cycle, in accordance with State laws and regulations.

Copies of the full publication, "Safeguarding The Vote", may be retrieved from www.electiontech.org.

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