

Testimony for Bill No. 1311
AN ACT CONCERNING THE INTEGRITY AND SECURITY OF THE
VOTING PROCESS
2/28/07

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is George Barnett and I live in New Milford, CT. I would like to address Bill No. 1311, "AN ACT CONCERNING THE INTEGRITY AND SECURITY OF THE VOTING PROCESS".

I am a former corporate auditor and have been involved in the election reform issue for the last two years. I am also a poll worker in New Milford and I reviewed the audit process for the new optical scan voting machines in Monroe, CT.

Bill No. 1311 is a positive step but it has several flaws and omissions. In general, the biggest problem with the bill is that it gives too much power to the Secretary of the State's (SOTS) office. For instance, the same SOTS office that is responsible for clean and accurate elections is also required to identify discrepancies. Sec. 2.(a) of the bill states, "the Secretary of the State may order a discrepancy recanvass.....if the Secretary has reason to believe that discrepancies may have occurred that could affect the outcome of the election". It is too much to ask the SOTS office to police itself and if the bill passes in its current form, it would create a clear conflict of interest.

In Monroe's District 1, there were differences of 45 and 25 votes between the machine count and the hand counts in two different races. The Registrars of Voters had a possible explanation for the 45 vote difference but could not account for the 25 vote difference. While these differences were not large enough to have changed the outcome of either of these elections even if extrapolated, they were large enough to raise questions. Were these differences big enough to warrant expanded audits? If not, what size differences should trigger more recounts? These are important issues that need to be addressed and here are four recommendations that would make this bill stronger.

1. Establish a permanent Voter Technology Standards Board (VTSB) to oversee the audit process and determine when expanded audits should take place. The members of this board would be appointed by the GAE so that they would be independent from the SOTS's office.
2. Base the percentage of machines to be audited on election results instead of using the set rate of 20%. For instance, in a one-sided race, it may only be necessary to audit 5% of the machines to obtain the desired level of confidence that the right candidate was elected. However, more than 20% may need to be recounted in very close races. This process may result in less ballots being recounted and simple calculations are available to determine the percentages needed in each race that will yield the desired level of confidence.
3. Establish guidelines for an independent board, such as the VTSB, to determine when expanded audits should take place. It is important that this function be carried out by an independent board and not the SOTS office.
4. Anytime audits are expanded due to differences between the machine counts and the hand counts, the state should have the right to examine the code within the voting machines that tabulates the ballots. This function should also be done by the VTSB.

Connecticut is doing more than any other state to ensure fair and accurate elections. Please make this bill as strong as possible so that Connecticut's election system can be a model for other states to strive toward.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

Please email George Barnett at info@truckremark.com or call at 203-775-0011 for more information.