Testimony for Post Election Audits
2/25/08

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is George Barnett and I live in New Milford, CT. I would like to address the "Post Election Audit Process".

I'd like to thank all of you for arranging this meeting and coming to Danbury, in addition to all the other stops you have made.

I am a former corporate auditor and have been involved in the election reform issue for the last three years. I am also a poll worker in New Milford and I witnessed the post election audit process for the optical scan voting machines in Monroe, CT after the 2006 trial run.

The Secretary of the State (SOTS) should be commended for selecting optical scan voting machines, which require the voter to complete a paper ballot. In addition, it is a positive step to have mandatory audit requirements to check the machines. However, there should be an independent audit board to administer the post election audit process. It is a clear conflict of interest to have the SOTS office manage the audit process and determine when to investigate differences and expand the audits when that same office is responsible for running the elections. This is similar to asking a contractor to inspect and pass his own work.

After the 2006 election, when the scanners were first used in 25 towns, I reviewed all of the post election audit results in addition to witnessing the process in Monroe. In 28 of the 550 recounts from 17 districts, there were differences of 10 votes or more between the machine counts and the hand counts. The differences discovered in Wethersfield District 10 between the machine counts and the hand counts of 105, 82 and 73 were particularly troubling.

In a 12/7/06 press release, this is what the SOTS had to say about the performance of the new voting machines:

*"We have **very good news** to report today, because it is now clear that **the optical scan machines performed very well on Election Day and without any problems.** Any changes in vote totals found in these audits were due to ballots being marked incorrectly by the voter, not to any problems with the optical scan machines." (emboldening added)*

However, in 19 out of these 28 recounts with differences of more than 10 votes, the machines recorded a higher vote count than the hand counts, including the three large differences in Wethersfield. T**hink about that. How can the differences be caused by incorrectly marked ballots if the machine counts are higher than the hand counts?** In Monroe a scanner counted 25 more votes than the audit hand count and no one in Monroe knew the cause of this difference. In addition, no one from the SOTS office contacted any Monroe election officials before the 12/7/06 press release. This difference was eventually resolved after the SOTS office was directly confronted with this issue but as far as I know, no follow-up was ever done on the differences in Wethersfield. This illustrates the need for an independent audit board.

In addition to establishing an independent audit board, here are two other steps that would give more assurance that the machines are counting the ballots accurately:

1) All recounts or audits should be done by hand. Running the ballots through another scanner is almost meaningless. If the memory card was programmed wrong causing the scanner to miscount the ballots, this will not be detected by running the ballots through another scanner.

2) All races should be audited on each machine selected for the post election audit process. Currently, only a sampling of the races are chosen from the selected machines, reducing the possibility of detecting a problem.

The 2007 elections resulted in similar differences to the 2006 elections. Again, to the best of my knowledge, there has been no follow up. This is why an independent audit board is critical. One election activist states that mandating a paper trail without also requiring post-election audits is like buying a security system for your house and then not turning it on. Connecticut has turned on the security system, by requiring audits, but by not following up on the differences we are essentially not responding when the alarm goes off. Please establish an independent audit board so we can determine the causes of the differences between the machine counts and the audit hand counts. Thank you for your time.

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

From the Office of Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, December 7, 2006

CONTACT: Dan Tapper, 509-6259
324-9862 (Cell)

AUDIT REPORT SHOWS OPTICAL SCAN MACHINES PERFORMED VERY WELL IN 2006 ELECTIONS

Few errors reported, none made by machines;
report shows optical scan technology to be secure and reliable

HARTFORD - Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz today released a report from her office and the University of Connecticut which shows that the optical scan voting machines used in several cities and towns on Election Day performed extremely well, and were proven to be a safe and secure form of voting technology.

The report was released following a randomly conducted series of audits in a number of cities and towns which used optical scan machines in place of lever machines this year. The audits were performed during the final week of November on optical scan machines used in seventeen polling precincts in nine cities and towns throughout the state. **(A COPY OF THIS REPORT IS INCLUDED WITH THIS PRESS RELEASE)**

The audits involved performing a manual recount of each voting machine used in these seventeen precincts to match the machine results with the separate hand-count. In the majority of the precincts, the counts matched up perfectly, and in those where the results did not match, there were only minor changes reported. In each instance, the change was due to a mismarked ballot, not to machine error, Secretary Bysiewicz said.

"I want to thank the University of Connecticut's Department of Computer Sciences for helping us to design this audit and write this report. We have very good news to report today, because it is now clear that the optical scan machines performed very well on Election Day and without any problems. Any changes in vote totals found in these audits were due to ballots being marked incorrectly by the voter, not to any problems with the optical scan machines. We are very pleased with these findings and look forward to introducing optical scan technology to the entire state for the November 2007 elections," Secretary Bysiewicz said.

"This success is the result of strong efforts made by our office and by Town Clerks and Registrars of Voters throughout the state to educate voters on how to use these new machines. We worked together to provide extensive training to poll workers

and elections officials, ran Public Service Announcements on radio and television, and equipped each polling precinct with a brief DVD, narrated in English and Spanish, demonstrating to voters how the optical scan machines are used," Secretary Bysiewicz said. "We also made sure that the ballots used closely resembled those found in lever machines. These efforts helped to make the new machines unintimidating to voters, and made them very comfortable to use. As a result, we saw few problems. We will continue these voter education efforts next year as well."

Attached you will find two pages of comments from various elections officials throughout Connecticut concerning the performance of optical scan machines. In addition, the following comment was made by Douglas Chapin, Director of Electionline.org, concerning Connecticut's introduction of optical scan voting technology this year.

"A big lesson from the 2006 election in that preparation pays. A key factor in whether or not jurisdictions had success or not so much success was the degree of preparation they applied to the process.

"The State of Connecticut moved to optical scan voting technology from their old lever machines for the first time in twenty-five of their 169 towns on Election Day. Connecticut, as a result, was one of the ten states we identified as states to watch on Election Day in our Election Preview in October.

"And yet, that experience in Connecticut went off largely without a hitch in Connecticut, even though they had very competitive and close elections in several races. Connecticut fanatically – I might even say obsessively – prepared for this election. They designed their optical scan ballot to look like a lever ballot, so voters would be comfortable with it. They had portable DVDs playing instructions in English and Spanish in the polling places. They had large numbers of new, well-trained, and in many cases younger poll workers available to help their voters. As a result, at the end of the day, that change was not as scary to voters, and it went off without a hitch."

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