



CGA Government Administration & Elections Committee
February 25, 2008 Public Hearing

Optical Scan Voting Machines and New Voting Process

Submitted by Christine Horrigan, Government Director

My name is Christine Horrigan. I am Director of Government for the League of Women Voters of Connecticut, a statewide organization with over 2300 members. On behalf of the League, I would like to thank you for giving the League an opportunity to comment upon the optical scan voting machines and the new voting process. My remarks tonight are based upon input from several League members who acted as election officials and poll workers during the November election and this month's primary, as well as comments from members who participated as observers in connection with The Connecticut Citizen Election Audit Coalition.

Over the past several years, the Secretary of the State's office has undertaken the difficult and complex process of transitioning the state from lever voting machines to a new, and largely unfamiliar, voting technology. The most glaring deficiency in this process has been the lack of consistency exhibited across the state. *The League believes that in part the inconsistency can be attributed to Secretary of the State procedures that need further refinement and clarity, in part to a "mixed commitment" on the part of local registrars and poll workers to the new voting technology and procedures, and in part to the normal birth pangs that accompany any major paradigm shift.* My comments tonight will focus on three areas: poll worker training, privacy and audits and the need to establish a mechanism to ensure that the voting process functions consistently across the state.

Poll Worker Training. The type of training offered to poll workers by registrars varies from community to community. It has been the League's experience that registrars do not always pass information on appropriately to the poll workers. For example, in one community the greeter "training" lasted 15 minutes and greeters were merely told to act "friendly" like they would if they were "greeters in church." Only after a pointed request by a greeter did registrars provide any written instructions. Handouts distributed to poll workers have varied from election to election and from town to town. Moderator training has been "all over the map." Some moderators have received repeated, formal training; others have not. Information and training on the IVS system for disabled voters has been inconsistent. Assistant registrars, who help with the opening and closing of the polls, are not always appropriately trained on the machine. The League believes that moderator and poll worker training must be more consistent, more user-friendly, more frequent (and closer to elections), and must consist of more "real world" experiences. It should also be followed up by placing training materials for all poll worker positions in the moderators' boxes for easy reference during an election.

Privacy. Like poll worker training, attempts to guarantee voters' privacy vary from town to town. For example, some communities place the ballot in a privacy folder before handing it to the voter. Others leave the privacy folders in the voting booths, allowing those who choose to use them to do so. Still others have privacy folders available, but do not "offer" them to voters.

Similarly, in some communities, machine tenders are allowed to stand next to the machine; in others, they are required to stand away from the machine and a “zone of privacy” is created, sometimes with duct tape on the floor. The League believes that the state should adopt standard procedures for ensuring voters’ privacy consistently across the state.

Audits. The League is a founding member of The Connecticut Citizen Election Audit Coalition which was involved in observing audits following the November 2007 election. A copy of the Coalition’s report can be found on the League’s website at www.lwvct.org. As noted in the summary section of the report, “[t]he Connecticut Citizen Election Audit Coalition observers reported many concerns over procedures that were problematic and over discrepancies between machine and hand counts in their reports of the post-election audit. Many, perhaps, all of these are attributable to procedures that should have been more specific, processes that should have been more consistent throughout the state, and to human errors in counting.” For example, the report notes that registrars exhibited a variety of methods for counting the ballots, some of which appeared reliable and others that appeared inadequate, made it impossible to trust the count, and often led to results that appeared incorrect. The League believes that consistent audit methods, based on best practices, should be put in place and that there should be a mechanism to “audit the audits” to ensure that rigorous methods and controls are employed and followed. These are just two of the 18 recommendations contained in the Report.

From training to privacy to audits, the most glaring deficiency in the transition to new voting systems is the lack of consistency exhibited across the state. The process currently lacks appropriate quality control. The League believes that a re-instituted Voting Technology Standards Board can serve a valuable role in addressing many of these issues. A properly constituted board would bring expertise to these matters and would allow for the proper balancing of the interests of various stakeholders in the process, e.g. voters, election workers, registrars, municipalities, etc. It would also provide consistency and a formal and ongoing process for evaluating best practices, new technologies and issues as they arise. Finally, it would act as a guide for the Secretary of the State’s office which would be charged with implementing the standards.

In closing, although not a new voting process, I would like to note for the record that there continue to be problems with the centralized voter registration system. The League believes that some of these problems stem from the fact that the Department of Information Technology acts as a gatekeeper for the system and that the Secretary of the State’s office shares mainframe resources with other agencies. We urge the committee to consider ways to make the centralized voter registration system more efficient and reliable, such as making it a stand-alone system with its own servers and support staff.

Thank you.