

Testimony for an Independent Election Audit Board  
2/18/09

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Madame Chairwoman, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is George Barnett and I live in New Milford, CT. I am a former corporate auditor and have been involved in the election reform issue for the last four years as a member of TrueVoteCT.

Connecticut needs an Independent Election Audit Board. Currently, the same Secretary of the State that is responsible for the elections is also responsible for managing the audit of this function. In addition, the Secretary of the State determines when to investigate differences between the machine totals and the manual hand counts. This is a clear conflict of interest.

In the corporate world it would be unthinkable to ask, say, the Accounts Payable manager, to audit his or her own department. Yet this is what the Secretary of the State does.

After the 2006 election, when the scanners were first used in 25 towns, I reviewed all of the post election audit results and also witnessed the process in Monroe. There were differences of 10 votes or more between the machine counts and the hand counts in 28 of the 550 recounts from 17 districts. 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, there is no evidence that any investigation of the differences was performed in 2006, or in subsequent elections. If we perform audits that turn up differences but we never investigate the reason for these differences, what is the point of going through this exercise?

The Secretary of the State should be commended for supporting the formation of an Independent Election Audit Board. I would ask that each of you give this proposal serious consideration. A Board, that manages the audit process, could be formed on a volunteer basis at no cost to Connecticut taxpayers.

We need to know that our votes are counted properly by machines that work. An Independent Election Audit Board could review the audit function after each election and continuously improve the process. Most importantly, a non-partisan Board, that investigates and determines the reasons for differences, will give voters confidence that the election process is fair and transparent.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

Please email George Barnett at [info@truckremark.com](mailto:info@truckremark.com) or call at 203-775-0011 for more information.