



Allegheny Chapter

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HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE DISCREPANCIES QUESTION INTEGRITY OF iVotronic VOTING MACHINES IN ALLEGHENY COUNTY

June 1, 2006. Serious procedural, operational, and design issues call into question the results from iVotronic voting machines used in Allegheny County in the May 16th primary election. Poll-worker statements and post-election analysis of voting-machine printouts from the election reveal that electronic voting machines ran program code not legally certified for use in Pennsylvania. It also appears that two different models of the ES&S iVotronic machine were used, one of which was not legally certified. Other print-outs demonstrate operational problems at many polling places and serious problems with the integrity of the iVotronic “zero-print” function, which is supposed to ensure the public that electronic “ballot-box stuffing” does not occur. The Allegheny County chapter of VotePA calls on County election officials to immediately and conclusively remedy these concerns and upgrade or replace systems as necessary to provide voters the assurance that every vote is accurately recorded and counted. At a joint press conference in downtown Pittsburgh, VotePA joined other concerned citizen groups, including People For the American Way Foundation, B-PEP –The Black Political Empowerment Project, and the League of Young Voters in urging Allegheny County to

implement an open and cooperative “culture of assurance” throughout the voting process so the integrity of the vote can become evident to all citizens.

Electronic voting machines are computers running programs which can contain accidental or potentially malicious errors. Because the ES&S iVotronic voting machines used in Allegheny County provide no way for voters to personally verify that their votes have been correctly and accurately recorded, voters must trust the iVotronic program code to be correct. The inspection and certification process carried out by the Secretary of the Commonwealth is meaningless unless the County ensures the machines run exactly the same program the Secretary certifies. VotePA has learned that uncertified software, of potentially unknown behavior, was run in the May 16th primary election. It appears that as many as half of the iVotronic machines used in the election were a model not inspected or legally certified for use in Pennsylvania elections. “Why should the public believe machines accurately record and count ballots when votes are cast on uncertified hardware and software?” asks Dr. Richard King of VotePA.

In order to prevent voting-machine “ballot-box stuffing” Pennsylvania election procedures require a zero-count printout be posted for public inspection before voting begins. The intent is to assure citizens that machines were not “stuffed” with votes before the election. VotePA has discovered numerous operational problems and apparent design issues with the iVotronic zero-print process.

Poll-worker reports and examinations of zero prints from many polling places show that zero prints were printed long after polls were opened and votes were cast on the machines. This means that many voters were forced to cast votes despite the danger that vote totals were manipulated. County technicians apparently invoked special administrative functions

throughout the election day to produce printouts claiming zero votes were cast before voting began. VotePA believes it is difficult for the public to trust these “time-travel” printouts. “There is a world of difference between a printout of a machine's current contents and a printout of what a machine says now that it contained before,” says Dr. David A. Eckhardt of VotePA, a Carnegie Mellon University computer scientist and Mt. Lebanon Judge of Elections.

Some zero prints provide even less assurance. VotePA has discovered situations where vote totals were reported for only one machine in a polling place – or even none. “Why would a machine print out that zero machines contain zero votes?” asked Collin Lynch, member of VotePA and Ph.D. candidate in Intelligent Systems at the University of Pittsburgh. “We as voters cannot trust our democracy to software that does that.”

A mixture of uncertified software, uncertified hardware, and dubious or meaningless zero prints casts serious doubts on election integrity. “When it comes to vote tampering or lost votes, absence of evidence isn't the same thing as evidence of absence” says Dr. Eckhardt.

VotePA believes citizens deserve clear and straightforward evidence that votes are accurately recorded and tallied and calls on the Secretary of the Commonwealth and the Allegheny County Board of Elections to immediately implement a “culture of assurance” including every aspect of the election process. Voting machines should consist of certified hardware running certified software which allow voters to personally verify that their vote has been correctly recorded. Thorough post-election audits should be routine. “These aren't vending machines, they're voting machines,” says Dr. Eckhardt. “What's at stake is more than fifty cents or filling out a refund form. Don't we deserve the best available assurance that these machines work right every time?”

VotePA is a statewide organization of volunteers dedicated to advocating for secure, accessible, recountable voting for all.

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