

330 Jefferson Dr.
Pittsburgh, PA 15228

April 4, 2006

Members, County Council
436 Grant St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Dear Council Members

My name is David Eckhardt. I reside at 330 Jefferson Drive in Mt. Lebanon. I have taught Computer Science at Carnegie Mellon for three years, after having received my Ph.D. there. My areas of specialty are computer operating systems and computer networks. In addition, I have served as a Judge of Elections in Mt. Lebanon since 1997. I appreciate the opportunity to address Council today on this pressing issue.

I believe a Citizen Advisory Board is very appropriate for the topic of voting, which is by its very nature intimately important to individual citizens from all walks of life. I commend Council for giving serious consideration to such a board as well as having spoken very clearly in the past about the importance of voting system integrity.

But I fear that the County is facing, today, a decision which cannot await the formation of such a board. The events of the past two weeks have starkly clarified the nature of the choice before us.

The outcome of the recent primary election in and around Chicago makes clear the enormous risks posed by a rush-job deployment of any new voting technology. As an election judge, I have become increasingly concerned, as the time before our primary has shrunk, that it would be impossible to properly train our poll workers. The Chicago example has moved me beyond concern, to fear.

Meanwhile, last week's certification fiasco makes it clear that the Sequoia AVC Advantage deserves even less voter trust than other paperless DRE machines—which is to say it is worse than “not good enough.”

I urge Council to do what is necessary to provide trustworthy elections. Since there is no reason to expect that a paperless DRE can ever be fixed, do not buy one. If we must make a purchasing decision immediately, we cannot overlook the state-certified, accessible, verifiable combination of the ES&S M100 precinct optical scanner and AutoMark ballot marking device.

Sincerely,

Dr. David A. Eckhardt