

330 Jefferson Dr.
Pittsburgh, PA 15228

April 18, 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 appreciate Council's long-standing focus on accessibility and verifiability for our election process, including the hearing in November associated with the voting machine fair, your resolution in favor of voter-verified paper records, and now today's consideration of a resolution urging Congress to stay our national headlong rush toward confusion. I support such a resolution.

But because I fear Congress won't listen, I am also here to urge you to take action on two other fronts.

First: since February the Elections Division and Dan Onorato have claimed that precinct-counted optical-scan voting machines—which are certified today and accessible today and provide a voter-verified paper record today—are unsuitable due to cost and reliability issues. But, also since February, these claims have not been in the form of side-by-side cost comparisons. We have presented them with such comparisons and in return have received nothing but repetitions of the vague claims. I call on Council to formally request the Elections Division to prepare and publish a written estimate of all relevant acquisition, material, maintenance, operation, and storage costs for the iVotronic system and at least one precinct-counted optical scan system.

Second: pass an ordinance guaranteeing the citizens of Allegheny County a voter-verified paper record, with routine post-election audits. If it is impractical for this to happen in May, pass an ordinance requiring paper records for November or next year. Do not be confused by claims that paper records are impossible without state legislative action. We could buy a precinct-counted optical-scan system today; we can buy one this summer, or this winter, or next spring. But please pass an ordinance now, so we can begin to work toward secure, verifiable elections—this year or next—not maybe, some day, for our children, perhaps.

Sincerely,

Dr. David A. Eckhardt