

Going beyond security in election reform Harvie Branscomb 1.1.08

In CO we need to hear a few very important messages loud and clear and soon- so you out there with the virtual megaphones, please take a look at these talking points and please move on beyond the security scare bandwagon for a little while!

1) **hand counting** is not a plague, it is an essential component of vendor tests, federal and state certification tests, acceptance tests, LAT, post election audit and effective recounts. In some jurisdictions it is still the actual method of original count! Hand counting not only can be done accurately, it must be more accurate than a machine count, since the machines are always tested against a hand count and it is simple common sense that machines can never interpret voter intent better than people can.

2) **problem free elections** show up for two reasons- a) the election really was problem free, b) there was no way to know the election had problems because the tests and audits are inadequate and the problems found are not documented and not publicized or even shared privately. Unfortunately in CO we have a high probability that (b) is the case judging from the lack of previous certification testing, the low precision of our LAT, the manner of conducting audits and the lack of information sharing.

3) **Central count** is not democratic in nature because it shields against transparency. Vote counting should be done in public in a decentralized manner if at all possible, whether machines or hand counts are involved. We are probably going to have to give up this point in 2008 to allow clerks to switch economically to central count optical scan, since they will not accept hand counting in Colorado. We can vote in precincts and then centrally count only when precinct counting is unavailable. Still the local precinct (or combined precinct) vote results can and should be returned to the polling place and posted, per Colorado statute.

4) **Optical scanners are subject to technical failures**, insufficiencies and fraud just as DRE are. DRE even with VVPAT (paper audit trail) offer an inadequate back up for the record of voter intent. Optical scanners do provide a very good and accessible backup of record of voter intent. (VVPAT do not even have space for a recognizable title of an amendment or initiative, hence for this reason alone among several others are simply not verified by voters)

4b) Optical scanners contain more high tech than DRE and in conjunction with their back-end tabulation systems require full testing against hand counts as follows-

- a) certification testing including functional testing at high ballot counts to be sure the software is bug free,
- b) hardware testing to insure that each machine is equally sensitive and working properly and equally well as the next machine,
- c) LAT to know the ballot is programmed properly and that the locally installed software is counting correctly,
- d) post- election audit to be sure the voter intent was properly interpreted and unusual marks handled properly by election judges, and
- e) hand recount in case of close victory margin to account for the known systematic inaccuracy of the entire system.

Some say going to a hand count with an audit would be simpler. That may well be the case.

5) **Machine recounts** of a sample of ballots are not audits, and audits require a study of the provenance and trail of custody of the ballots as well as checks of the operation of the machines which do counting.

6) Expensive election hardware means **lines will form somewhere** at some time and unfairly so. A properly designed polling place will have no lines and will use paper ballots and a lot of pens and places to vote to accomplish this. Lines convince would-be voters to walk away.

7) **Signature checking** will either enfranchise the ineligible or disenfranchise the eligible or both. Voters should be present when this decision of eligibility is made (meaning: at the polls). Followup for and by voters found ineligible is not sufficient.

8) Voters also should be present when **a machine interprets** their ballot. All exceptions found by the machine should be handled by the voter.

9) **Precinct or super precinct** (for efficiency) voting keeps citizens involved in the election process. This is way more democratic in nature than big box voting.

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