

Colorado Voter Group

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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Colorado Voter Group wants polling place elections with a few adjustments.

Group concerned that back room deals will trade accuracy for convenience.

Colorado election officials and legislators are already discussing contingency plans. What happens if electronic vote recording and electronic vote counting equipment fail to pass certification tests?

The Colorado Voter Group today published "Colorado Elections 2008 - Framework for Primary and General Elections". It calls for a typical "polling place election" with a few changes. The changes are designed to reduce the risks associated with electronic vote recording and counting equipment.

Precinct, early, absentee, and provisional voting are included in the plan. Accessible voting is available at early and precinct polling locations.

One change requires that all votes must be recorded on paper ballots. Some of the uncertified voting equipment records votes on both an electronic ballot and a voter verifiable paper audit trail. Votes from the audit trails will be transcribed by the bipartisan ballot duplication board to paper ballots before counting.

If all votes are counted by hand, the framework recommends that ballot designs be optimized for accurate and verifiable hand-counting of votes.

Uncertified vote counting equipment may provisionally be used in precincts and central counting locations. But logic & accuracy tests, post election audits, and election canvassing must be significantly strengthened to verify that results are correct.

According to Al Kolwicz, spokesperson for Colorado Voter Group, "This framework defines what is needed to conduct a trustworthy 2008 Election. It is sensitive to the realities of Colorado's situation. It should be adopted, whether or not voting equipment is certified."

MORE - FRAMEWORK

The framework assumes that emergency temporary certification will be issued for some, if not all, electronic equipment. It also assumes that the Secretary of State will set conditions to minimize potential damage and uncertainty caused by using uncertified equipment.

The Colorado Voter Group has found that anonymous paper ballots, with votes marked in a precinct's private voting booth and hand counted, are the most trustworthy and transparent voting method. Electronic voting equipment that records votes on paper ballots brings private voting to handicapped voters. Although certified elsewhere, this equipment is not yet certified for use in Colorado.

In-person voting can be made intimidation-free and electioneering-free while mail voting cannot. When all votes are recorded on paper ballots, election oversight is simplified and more transparent.

Electronic voting equipment that records votes on electronic ballots poses a threat to accurate election results; more so when the equipment has not been certified. Electronic ballots are more vulnerable to undetected errors and fraud than are paper ballots. Election judges and poll watchers cannot see if votes are changed. They cannot verify that votes are correctly interpreted and counted.

All-mail ballot elections eliminate precinct and early voting and the opportunity to vote using an anonymous ballot. It is the least secure option. There is no way to prevent vote selling/buying, voter intimidation, and illegal electioneering. Most all-mail ballot election activity occurs outside of public view. With no independent oversight, there is no reason to trust the results.

Kolwicz says, "Officials would do well to remember the results of a 2002 statewide referendum where all-mail balloting for Primary and General elections was rejected by 57.6% of voters.

Kolwicz says, "We believe it would be irresponsible to put Colorado's Presidential votes at risk. The all-mail ballot approach is fraud and error prone and the voters have rejected it. The electronic ballot approach makes error and fraud detection almost impossible. We should not use all-mail ballots or electronic ballots for the 2008 elections."

MORE - POLICY DEBATE

The policy debate regarding voting systems for the 2008 election is underway. Legislators are meeting with state and county election officials in an attempt to gather information and to hear arguments for and against various alternatives.

But the people are not a part of the debate. As a result, valuable facts are being excluded from the debate.

Some voters are concerned that election officials do not always pursue the correct agenda. They believe that some officials assert opinion as fact, and withhold inconvenient facts.

Election officials generally give highest priority to election cost, ease of implementation, high turnout percentage, quick results, and superficial compliance with election laws and procedures.

Colorado Voter Group believes that concerned voters give the highest priority to election accuracy, accessibility for all voters, verifiability, reliability, security, transparency, accountability, and voter anonymity using secret ballots. The group also believes that concerned voters demand the absence of voter intimidation, vote buying/selling, and illegal electioneering.

Kolwicz says, "We are concerned that the public's voice is being excluded from the discussion. County clerks enjoy preferential access to legislators and the Secretary of State. Clerks are using this access to convince state officials to adopt their one-sided agenda. They are not telling the whole story. The public needs to be included."

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Reference material:

Colorado Elections 2008 – Framework for Primary and General Elections – 11/19/2007
<http://alkolwicz.net/Documents/Colorado%202008%20Elections%20-%20Framework.pdf>