

## Ensuring the Future Integrity of the Vote

### Auditing Voting Machines

The use of post-election vote audits of the electronic data files by the South Carolina State Elections Commission (SEC) has vastly increased confidence that the certified vote is correct. These post-election audits would have detected the errors found in the 2010 General Election before the totals were certified. The LWVSC supports S.1025, which requires post-election audits; this legislation has been passed by the SC Senate (38-0) and is now (March 29, 2012) in the House Judiciary Committee.

### Auditing and Recounting Paper Ballots

However, once progress is made in ensuring the integrity of votes cast on iVotronic machines, it becomes necessary to examine the accuracy of counting and recounting paper ballots. Currently, only a small percentage of votes are cast on paper ballots, but it is likely that any future technology will be almost entirely paper ballots.

The SEC has instructed counties to perform recounts of paper ballots by scanning the ballots a second time. When the same scanner is used to recount the same paper ballots, it is expected that the second scan will give the same results as the first scan. The Audit Task Force of the LWVUS<sup>1</sup> reports that “a well-conducted, transparent hand count of paper ballots almost always uncovers a few additional votes where the voter intent is clear, but the votes were not detected by a machine count. This is to be expected.”

Technical problems have been identified with scanners. In December 2011, the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), noting major flaws in the DS200 optical scanner,<sup>2</sup> issued a notice of noncompliance. Tests of the ES&S Model 650 scanner,<sup>3</sup> used in some counties in SC, ignored marks that a person would interpret as a vote. As long as computers are used to count votes, not only will technical glitches present problems, software bugs, or a malicious election-rigging code, can be inserted into the vote recording and tabulating process. Post-election manual random audits are necessary to detect these problems.

The Election Audits Task Force of the LWVUS recommends that both audits and recounts be performed.

Post-election audits differ from recounts. Post-election audits routinely check voting system performance in contests, regardless of how close margins of victory appear to be. Recounts repeat ballot counting in special circumstances, such as when preliminary results show a close margin of victory.<sup>4</sup>

South Carolina does not audit paper ballots and the procedure for "recounting" the paper ballots is not an acceptable recount. Because of the way computers work, the "recount" is highly unlikely to be different from the original count.

South Carolina needs to initiate procedures for auditing scanned ballots in every election and to improve procedures for recounting paper ballots.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://lww.org/content/report-election-audits-task-force>

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[http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9223613/U.S.\\_Finds\\_Flaws\\_in\\_ES\\_S\\_DS200\\_Voting\\_Machine](http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9223613/U.S._Finds_Flaws_in_ES_S_DS200_Voting_Machine)

<sup>3</sup> Jones, Douglas & Simons, Barbara (2012). *Broken Ballots*, Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, Figure 4.8.

<sup>4</sup> <http://lww.org/content/report-election-audits-task-force>