

Joint Statement on the Election and Protecting the Vote

Voters have heard a great deal about threats to the integrity of the election this November. With just days remaining, it is in all likelihood too late to enact the many structural reforms our system so badly needs. Even at this late date, however, meaningful steps can be taken to improve voting security and restore voters' confidence that when they go to the polls, their votes will count.

● **Get Out and Vote, Vote Early...and Don't Forget Your ID:** *Voters should go to the polls and vote on Election Day, whatever voting system is in use. Voters should also take advantage of early voting (by absentee ballot or in person) if possible. And all voters, regardless of the specific laws in their state, should bring identification (preferably a government-issued photo ID) to the polls in order to reduce the likelihood of problems.*

Fear about flawed election results can be manipulated to suppress voter turnout, and voter turnout may decide this election. If voters don't turn out at the polls, the election will not be stolen; it will be given away. Voters in many states who have concerns about problems at the polling place can vote early on paper ballots by requesting and casting an absentee ballot.

Federal law now requires first-time voters who registered by mail to present identification before voting. Some states go beyond the federal law and require all voters to present ID. Although we oppose identification requirements, because pollworkers are often confused about the law and mistakenly turn away voters on Election Day, all voters should prevent problems before they occur by bringing identification to the polls on Election Day. The most preferable form is a current government-issued photo ID such as a driver's license or a passport. Voters who do not have this should bring other types of valid photo ID, or other documentation showing the voter's name and address, such as a bank statement or utility bill. Additionally, several states may require proof of citizenship in the form of a voter's naturalization certificate.

Anyone who experiences problems with ID or any other matters at the polling place on Election Day should call the Election Protection hotline at (866) OUR-VOTE. Election Protection is a nationwide voter empowerment program launched by a broad coalition of civil rights and voting rights organizations.

● **Electronic Voting Machines:** *Election officials should have electronic voting machines extensively tested from this day forward until Election Day, including holding mock elections that rigorously test the machines' security, accessibility and interface. This is particularly important in counties where election problems have occurred in the past and in states where the results will be close.*

The controversy over electronic voting machines has reached near fever-pitch over the last year. Adopted by 675 counties nationwide as an intended solution to the problems associated with punchcard voting machines in Florida in 2000 and to provide persons with disabilities and language minorities with access to voting, electronic voting machines are now believed by some to be vulnerable to tampering or malfunctions. Both anecdotal evidence and scientific analysis suggest that problems are possible on Election Day. While the undersigned organizations have various positions on the requirement of voter-verified paper trails, it is unlikely that auditable voter-verified paper trails or other backup mechanisms can be installed nationwide on every machine.

It should be understood, however, that testing alone will not guarantee a smooth Election Day. Several of the key components for a successful election are: fully staffing polling locations and rigorously training poll workers, securing voting technology and maintaining a chain of custody for voting machines, and ensuring transparency in every aspect of the process.

Election officials should also make all decisions related to programming, deployment, and operation of voting machines open to the public. In this way, citizens, computer security professionals and those knowledgeable about the election system can review these processes, voice any criticisms or concerns, and help to ensure the system's integrity. *The worst thing election officials can do is to keep the system closed. Voters are understandably worried about a "black box" that gives them no visible proof that their votes have been counted accurately.* And all jurisdictions, no matter which machine they are using, must allocate sufficient resources to ensure the proper functioning (including repair and replacement) of machines on Election Day.

● **Election System Scorecard.** We plan to keep a close eye on how election officials prepare for the election and perform on Election Day. We will monitor pre-election security measures for counties that use electronic machines and track Election Day incidents and irregularities nationwide. The results will be published in a scorecard that evaluates how jurisdictions performed. Points will be earned for a variety of measures, including:

- Implementing recommendations from an experienced, independent security expert
- Testing electronic voting machines for logic and accuracy in public view
- Providing public access to the vote tallying process, including public posting of vote tallies at each polling place on Election Day
- Performing a full audit of electronic voting machine logs
- Maintaining a chain of custody of and providing for the physical security of electronic voting machines before, during, and after Election Day
- Providing extensive training for pollworkers on Election Day
- Establishing a system for Election Day problems to be reported and handled promptly
- Providing privacy for voters to cast a secret ballot
- Ensuring polling places are fully accessible to disabled and language minority voters
- Ensuring provisional ballots are available at all polling places to accommodate problems with registration rolls and to provide backup for voting machine failures

Every eligible voter has the right to vote and have that vote counted. That right, however, is threatened if voters cannot trust the voting systems and procedures that are used for casting and counting votes. In the time that remains, our organizations are committed to making sure that every eligible voter's voice will be heard on Election Day.

This statement has been joined by:

Gov. Howard Dean, Prof. Avi Rubin, Prof. Peter Neumann, Prof. David Dill, ACORN, Advancement Project, AFL-CIO, American Families United Voter Protection Project, Brennan Center, Center for American Progress, Common Cause, Democracy for America, EPIC, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, MoveOn.org, NAACP, National Council of La Raza (NCLR), National Committee for Voting Integrity (NCVI), National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (NCBCP), National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (NAPALC), People For the American Way, True Majority, and Verified Voting Foundation.