

Leadership Conference on Civil Rights



June 29, 2004

Dear Chief Election Official:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to you with a set of recommendations that we urge your state and local election jurisdictions to follow this year in responding to concerns that have arisen with the use of Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) or so-called “touch screen” voting systems.

As the attached report by the Brennan Center for Justice and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR) points out, the use of DRE voting systems offers many potential advantages but, like with any voting systems, also raises many concerns about security breaches and malfunctions. In an effort to address these concerns to the best extent possible before the November 2004 elections, we believe that the following steps – as outlined in the Brennan Center & LCCR report – should be promptly taken:

1. Elections officials should hire a well-qualified, independent security team to examine the potential for operational failures of and malicious attacks against the jurisdiction’s DRE voting system.
2. The assessment performed by the independent experts should cover, at a minimum, hardware design, hardware & firmware configuration, software design & configuration, election procedures, and physical security.
3. Elections officials should implement the critical recommendations of the independent expert security team and demonstrate to experts and voters alike that the recommendations have been implemented.
4. Elections officials should provide a thorough training program for all elections officials and workers on security procedures to ensure that the protocols recommended by the independent expert security team are not disregarded in the face of Election-Day exigencies.
5. State and local elections officials should have in place a permanent independent technology panel, including both experts in voting systems and computer security and including citizens representing the diverse constituencies involved in election oversight, to serve as a public monitor over the entire process outlined above and to perform a post-election security and performance assessment.
6. Elections officials should establish standard procedures for regular reviews of audit facilities and operating logs for voting terminals and canvassing systems to verify correct operation and uncover any evidence of potential security breaches.
7. All jurisdictions should prepare and follow standardized procedures for response to alleged or actual security incidents that includes standardized reporting and publication.

Also attached with the report is a request for proposal (RFP) kit that we believe you will find useful in securing the services of a well-qualified, independent security team to review DRE voting systems that may be in use in your state. We hope that you will carefully review these attached materials, and pass them along to jurisdictions in your state that plan on using DRE voting systems this November.

Thank you for your consideration and assistance. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Jeremy Creelan of the Brennan Center for Justice at (212) 992-8642, or Rob Randhava of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights at (202) 466-6058.

Sincerely,



Wade Henderson, Executive Director
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights



Deborah Goldberg, Democracy Program Director
Brennan Center for Justice

Endorsing Organizations:

American Association of People with Disabilities
Common Cause
Electronic Privacy Information Center
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
National Committee for Voting Integrity
Paralyzed Veterans of America
People For the American Way

Individual Experts in Computer Security and Related Fields:

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