



**STATEMENT OF
COMMON CAUSE PRESIDENT CHELLIE PINGREE**

SENATE RULES & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Hearing on Voter Verification in the Federal Elections Process

June 21, 2005

Common Cause shares the view of a growing number of Americans who have serious concerns about the reliability and security of touch-screen voting machines.

Common Cause strongly supports requiring a voter verified paper audit trail for all voting systems. We believe this committee and every election official in the country should move to ensure that there be a paper trail for everyone who casts a vote.

Too many questions have been raised about electronic voting machines, about their manufacturers and about the hasty acceptance of this technology by some elections officials. We need to take a step back and make sure we are doing the right thing for this fundamental right in our democracy.

In the past few years, the country has struggled through elections marked by doubts about one of the basic functions of our government – counting votes. The serious shortcomings in our nation’s election system have been exposed. Voters’ faith in how we cast and count votes has been damaged. We cannot afford any further erosion in voters’ trust.

Common Cause believes that the ability to verify your vote and have a record of each vote as cast must be an integral part of voting equipment – it is important for the accuracy of vote-counting and for Americans’ long-term trust in elections.

Derek Bok
Chairman

Chellie Pingree
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Archibald Cox
Chairman Emeritus

John Gardner
Founding Chairman

We believe that the goal of making voting accessible to all is not incompatible with requiring a paper trail. Voting must be accessible to all. We must not place obstacles in the way of people with disabilities or voters who are not proficient in English. We share the concerns of those who have worked for many years to ensure that all voters can vote independently and privately. But we believe that no one's right to vote has meaning if the voter cannot be reasonably assured that their vote was counted as cast.

Voting machine manufacturers and some elections officials have rushed to develop and put in place touch-screen machines without sufficient regard to voters' confidence in the machines and without regard to basic principles of transparency and accountability. A business-as-usual manner, careless procedures, and overtly partisan activity by some vendor executives has exacerbated voters' alarm about the new machines.

We do not believe that current touch screen technology allows the voter to verify his or her vote in a meaningful manner. The voter must have faith that the internal software is correctly tallying the vote – and there is currently no way to verify the vote independent of that software. Furthermore, without a paper record it is not possible to conduct a meaningful audit or recount. In our current closely divided electorate, the ability to conduct a recount is crucial to voters' confidence in our democracy.

The issue before the committee today is not the only critical issue regarding our election system that must be resolved. But this hearing is about one of the fundamentally important functions of the government in our democracy: providing a fair, secure, convenient and accessible voting system. The act of voting is the cornerstone of our democracy. Americans must have confidence that their vote will be counted fairly and accurately.