

Subject: Comments on Recommendations draft paper

From: [REDACTED]

To: voting.systems.task.force

Date: 03/04/2011 12:00 PM

Dear SFVSTF,

Please find my comments attached. Your task force is doing a great and valuable service for the citizens of the City and County of San Francisco.

Best Regards,

Chandra Friese

Comments submitted for consideration to the San Francisco Voting Systems Task Force on:

Recommendations on Voting Systems for the City and County of San Francisco, January 2011

By Chandra Friese

March 4, 2011

I would first like to commend the Task Force on an excellent job in creating a document which will inform our community and Board of Supervisors on procedures and procurement of voting systems for our City elections. The diligence and hard work of the Task Force is evident and appreciated by citizens such as myself who have followed the issues involved in elections systems throughout the country since the 2002 election cycle. I am among the many who have had serious concerns about San Francisco being able to avoid election problems inherent in certain types of election equipment and procedures.

P. 8, para. Line 5: The concept of a risk-limiting audit is not clear in this paragraph:

Use of the term "risk-limiting audit": does this concept take the place of verifying the results of the election?...they are two different things?

Who establishes "specific criteria"?

Who decides what the risk of an incorrect outcome must be and with what guiding principles?

How transparent is this process to the general public?

P 10 . finding 3: There is an assumption in this “finding” that the current post-election audit SHOULD be a risk-limiting audit.

Does this not have the effect of presupposing only one solution? This language seems to eliminate all other possibilities.

Line 11-14: “Line 13: Performing this process for a randomly selected fraction of the precincts therefore assures the outcome with some probability” : “some probability”: these could mean “more or less” probability, depending on how many randomly selected precincts are audited.

What “probability” is adequate, or how do we determine the adequacy? By whom?

What is adequate to restore citizen confidence in our elections, and is that not what we are going for?

Is there a formula for a 100% risk-limiting audit?

P. 10 Line 34 :Alternative Auditing Procedures:

“Humboldt County Election Transparency Project” is known officially as TEVS, Trachtenberg Election Verification System. Should this not be corrected? TEVS was indeed used in the Humboldt County Election Transparency Project.

TEVS is classified in this paper as an “ alternative auditing procedure”, as is RLA. But it is not and does not classify or advertise itself as such. It is an independent verification of election results.

The Humboldt County project was not an audit, it was a redundant count of the ballots, and independent verification of the election results.

P 11. Line 12: The number of Risk-limiting audits which have been carried out has been small, and this fact is not clear in this finding.

P. 13 line 4: Near-term Recommendations

Line 28: the obtaining of the paper ballots for scanning by academic organizations would not be timely enough to restore confidence in the elections. This procedure would take months at the least and would cost these organizations money, which would be a disincentive for anything other than academic purposes rather than citizen confidence or verification.

I would urge the Task Force to include :

Conduct a TEVS pilot of the 1% manual tally in a 2011 election.

General Comments:

This paper includes innumerable enlightening facts about our SF elections; its systems, needs, and alternatives. It is puzzling that the paper seems seriously weighted in favor of the Risk-limiting audit procedure, while TEVS seems to disappear from the analysis.

I have seen multiple demonstrations of TEVS. Voter confidence has been shown to be restored in the county-wide use of TEVS in Humboldt and Yolo counties. An expensive recount was avoided in a very close race due to the high confidence level in the election results, even on the part of the losing candidate, which had been accompanied by the use of TEVS. (2010 Southern Humboldt Hospital District race) TEVS “provide(s) for transparency and public auditability of voting systems components and elections data”, which is part of the mission of the VSTF. TEVS should be given full treatment in this analysis because of this capability.

Respectfully,

Chandra Friese