

Subject: Re: public comment, draft recommendations on voting systems

From: Scott Menzies

To: voting.systems.task.force, Mitch Trachtenberg

Date: 03/02/2011 04:24 PM

Members of the Voting Systems Task Force,

Due to being unavailable at the time this comment was originally sent, I would like add my name to it as a signatory, with the understanding that I fully SUPPORT this statement, the goals and work of the Humboldt Election Transparency Project, and the premise, for the purpose of recount and auditing using the system of TEVS or any similar system, that voted ballots and/or images should be considered documents in the public domain, reviewable by all who should desire to ensure election integrity and accountability.

Thank you very much,
Scott Menzies



Mitch Trachtenberg wrote:

In the section on Post Election Auditing, the Task Force has noted the Humboldt County Election Transparency Project's successful independent counting of elections in Humboldt County, CA (Finding 6).

As volunteers with that project who have all been involved for several years -- one of us is the projects' founder and one of us is the developer of the software used to count votes from the ballot images -- we are disturbed that your recommendations do not provide for making ballot images available except to academic organizations. None of those active in the Transparency Project have any affiliation with any academic organization; we did our work not as a research project, but as a means of ensuring that election counts in our County were accurate. If your recommendations 4 and 5 had been in place, it is unclear that the Transparency Project would have been granted access to San Francisco ballot images.

While much of the academic work in designing risk limiting audits may provide for efficient auditing, we believe complete independent and redundant counts provide citizens with the evidence they need to feel confidence in election results even if they have not studied probability and statistics. Given the rapidly declining prices of scanners and computers and the demonstrated success of the Humboldt County Election Transparency Project, we hope the Task Force will recognize the value of the Humboldt approach and recommend that ballot images should be made available to any interested citizen or group.

We continue to believe that the best solution to reliably detecting errors in a count is also the simplest -- count a second time. While some see hypothetical difficulties in allowing anyone to view anonymous ballots, we feel the benefits from providing citizens with direct access to ballot images -- enabling citizens of a democracy to count elections themselves -- far outweigh the hypothetical difficulties.

Kevin Collins
Tom Pinto

Mitch Trachtenberg