

May 16, 2005

The Honorable Susan Bysiewicz
Secretary of the State
State Capitol, Room 104
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Secretary Bysiewicz,

I am writing this letter to address the RFP issued for the DRE or touch-screen voting machines. I am a fellow Democrat and I am grateful to you for all of the service that you have performed for the State of Connecticut. However, I disagree with the direction the State is headed with the RFP for the DRE voting machines.

As a taxpayer to the State and the Town of New Milford, where I am an alternate on the Board of Finance, I believe that the purchase of the DREs amounts to an unfunded mandate to the local municipalities. As a member of TrueVoteCT, I also believe that there are alternatives to the DREs that are less expensive and more reliable. In addition, there have been two recent developments that should be considered before the State commits to purchasing the DRE machines.

One of the reasons that the State is focusing on DREs is that they provide access to the disabled, which is a great benefit and something that needs to be done to allow up to 300,000 disabled CT citizens to participate in the election process. I applaud you for your consideration of this minority group and I am proud to be a citizen of a State where these kinds of issues are addressed.

However, a recent development that will allow access to the disabled with another voting system needs to be considered. On May 9, 2005, ES&S issued a press release that stated that the AutoMARK ballot marking machine has successfully completed final testing by the Independent Testing Authority and ES&S expects full certification status in June 2005. The AutoMARK ballot marking technology allows voters with special needs to mark an optical scan ballot privately and independently. This technology would give the State the option of purchasing the less expensive and more reliable Optical Scan voting machines while still enabling the disabled to vote independently. With full federal certification so close for the AutoMARK ballot marker, serious consideration should be given to the purchase of the Optical Scan voting machines. A link to the press release is listed below as well as a link to a video that shows a visually impaired person using the AutoMARK system.

Other states that have chosen Optical Scan machines are Rhode Island, Arizona, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Michigan. In addition, South Dakota has indicated that it will be using the AutoMARK to provide access to voters with disabilities. Another important document about Optical Scan technology was written by Terri Lynn Land, the Secretary of the State from the State of Michigan, and it is called "A Uniform Voting System for Michigan". A link to this document and an article about the use of the AutoMARK in South Dakota are listed below.

The other recent event referred to in this letter is addressed in an April 12, 2005 article from the Miami Herald that discusses the election process in Miami-Dade County in Florida. This county spent \$24.5 million on DRE machines in 2002, and after using them for recent elections, the county is seriously considering scrapping the DRE machines, effectively throwing away the \$24.5 million. The reason they are considering this extreme move is because hundreds of votes were not counted in recent elections and the costs to run elections with DREs are more than three times their previous cost. **The complete article is attached to this email and I urge you to contact Lester Sola, the Supervisor of Elections of Miami-Dade County before purchasing any DRE**

machines. I have spoken to other election officials from Miami-Dade County and I think it would benefit the whole State if you talked to Mr. Sola before purchasing a voting system. The State of CT should not jeopardize its future by putting itself in the same position that Miami-Dade County is in now. We can avoid their mistake if we take our time and make the correct decision.

Another supposed advantage of DREs is that, while their initial purchase price is substantially higher than other alternatives like Optical Scan, the ongoing costs to run elections is said to be less with the DRE machines. Miami-Dade County has discovered the hard way that this simply is not true. The thought was that because paper ballots, which cost approximately \$.30 each, would not be required with DREs that the cost of the election would be much less. However, the use of DREs still requires election districts to purchase paper ballots for absentee and provisional voting and in Miami-Dade they purchased some back-up ballots in case there were problems with the machines. While DREs use less paper ballots than Optical Scan, the cost per ballot is greater on DREs due to volume discounts and set-up charges. It is also important to note is that the State would need at least 4-5 times as many DREs as Optical Scan machines because of the number of votes processed by each. In addition, the DREs are much larger and have several other storage and programming issues. Page 58 from the VotersUnite Myth Breakers document (see the link below) lists other additional costs that DREs incur:

- 1) Increased costs for secure and environmentally-controlled storage.
- 2) Increased energy costs for keeping back-up batteries charged between elections
- 3) Increased labor costs for security when these machines are stored overnight at polling places before elections
- 4) Increased costs for hardware maintenance and software upgrades for thousands of these machines
- 5) Increased costs for expendable parts including back-up batteries and smart cards
- 6) Increased labor costs for verifying that each machine has the correct version of software and firmware before and after each election
- 7) Increased labor costs for individually performing logic and accuracy tests on every one of the thousands of machines before and after each election
- 8) Increased labor costs for hiring additional poll workers (San Diego doubled the number of poll workers when it switched to DREs)
- 9) Increased costs for poll worker training
- 10) Massive costs for replacing these machines when they age and the technology they employ is no longer maintainable or supported by the vendor.**

This is why I believe that purchasing the DREs is basically an unfunded mandate for the local municipalities and is the wrong choice for CT. Other options, such as Optical Scan machines, are more reliable, much less expensive to purchase and much less expensive to run future elections with. Additionally, these systems will almost certainly be federally certified as being accessible to the disabled. I could cite many, many examples of problems with DREs but that will be saved for another letter. Please start over with a new RFP that considers all available election systems so that CT purchases the system that will provide the most accurate voting at the best price while still providing accessibility to the disabled. The current RFP does not do this and I urge you to consider issuing a new RFP that does. Please respond to this email or call me at 203-775-0011 if you have any questions and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

George Barnett