

GAE Public Hearing
February 28, 2007
Testimony of Richard Sivel, CCAG

Chairs and members of the GAE committee,

My name is Richard Sivel. I reside in West Hartford and I am a community organizer with Connecticut Citizen Action Group. I am here today to offer testimony in support of Senate Bill 1311 AN ACT CONCERNING THE INTEGRITY AND SECURITY OF THE VOTING PROCESS.

First I would like to commend the GAE for initiation of legislation in 2005 that resulted in passage of Public Act 05-188. This act requires a voter-verified paper ballot for all voting technology used in Connecticut. This legislation put Connecticut in the forefront of states ensuring the integrity of their voting systems.

I also commend the Secretary of the State for the careful and prudent selection of new voting technology. Today there are many alternative voting machine technologies available. After careful study and evaluation by the Secretary of State's office and the Voter Technology Center at UCONN, the state selected optical scan voting machines to be implemented state-wide. Most of us are familiar with optical scan technology because of the forms we filled out in taking the Scholastic Aptitude Test back in our school days. Optical scan technology has been around for a long time and is widely familiar and accepted by most citizens. It includes, by its very nature, a voter-verified paper ballot.

Public Act 05-188 also requires a mandatory, random audit of votes cast on electronic voting machines, so-called DRE or ATM-style machines. Whether due to a drafting error or because it was widely believed at the time that Connecticut would select DRE machines to replace the old lever machines, the audit requirement applied only to these ATM-style machines. SB 1311 fixes this problem by requiring mandatory, random audits of *any* voting system used in Connecticut.

SB 1311 also sets a standard by requiring an audit of 20% of the voting districts in the state. We strongly support this goal. We believe it guarantees the highest level of confidence in our election outcomes.

The Secretary of State conducted a voluntary audit of the new optical scan machines during the last election in November. SB 1311 codifies a *mandatory* audit for any current or future voting technology. We believe this goes a long way in ensuring the integrity of our voting system and public confidence in the system. The devil is in the details, of course, and we look forward to continuing to work with the Secretary of the State's office in working out these details.

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Besides audits, there are other issues related to voting technology which we believe should be addressed in this or other legislation.

1. Should the Secretary of the State order a discrepancy recanvass, such recanvass should be conducted by a manual count of the paper ballots, rather than simply re-tabulating them on whatever voting machine they were originally tabulated. Although this could be accomplished by regulation, we believe it should have the full authority of statute.
2. Reinstatement of the Voting Technology Standards Board. This Board was created by the same statute that mandates a voter-verified paper ballot. Its major function was to provide input on the selection of new voting technology and it had a finite lifespan. We believe that there should be continuing opportunity for those involved in administering our voting system, and members of the general public, to have input as this technology continues to evolve. We believe this is important regardless of the continuing relationship with the Voter Technology Research center at UCONN. This center has done tremendous work in testing and technical oversight of the technology itself.
3. There are several other technical considerations that would strengthen the integrity of Connecticut's voting system.
 - a. A ban on the outsourcing of any part of the election process, including but not limited to, the programming of memory cards used to set up the ballot for the various precincts. This would ensure that Connecticut officials would remain in control of all aspects of our voting system.
 - b. Open data formats for ballot programming and election-related electronic data, including electronic ballots, tallies and audit logs. This would ensure that Connecticut election officials and the Voter Technology Research center at UCONN would have full access to machine internals as they evaluate and administer voting technology.

In summary, CCAG strongly supports proposed bill SB1311 and respectfully requests the committee to consider the additional proposals I have outlined.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be glad to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Richard Sivel
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