ELECTIONS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION
COST OF TESTING & UNIFIED TESTING INITIATIVE
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Good afternoon and welcome to Florida. Unlike when this meeting was scheduled for last August, I promise you will not be experiencing any hurricanes!

I am honored to speak to you today to share Florida's experiences with voting systems certification and testing and our conversion from touchscreen to optical scan. In my 33 years as an elections administrator, I have gone through three voting systems conversions. As Supervisor of Elections in Pasco County, I implemented the change from lever machines to punch cards and from punch cards to touchscreens. As Secretary of State, my department coordinated the conversion from touch screen to optical scan in 2008.

Florida became an all optical scan state on July 1, 2008. Fifteen, many of our largest counties, representing over half the registered voters in our state, made the transition from touchscreen to optical scan voting systems. We have conducted two successful statewide elections on the new equipment, including the November General Election. That did not happen by accident. So how did we do it?

Planning and Preparation.
And never taking anything for granted.

In February of 2007, Florida Governor Charlie Crist announced his voting system conversion plan. Throughout our 2007 Legislative Session, I met with impacted county Supervisors of Elections to brief them on changes to the proposal as it moved through the legislative process. When the Governor signed the legislation in May of that year, the Department of State set a timeline and benchmarks for the conversion and began working with Supervisors to implement the system changes. We met or exceeded every benchmark.

The most important benchmark was certifying the new systems. I believe Florida has one of the toughest certification programs in the nation and over the last two years, we have expanded that program to include in-house source code review. Florida does not require federal certification of voting systems so our Bureau of Voting Systems Certification, under the direction of David Drury, was the first to test and certify the latest optical scan technology during this past election cycle: the ESS DS200, the Premier OSX, and the Sequoia Insight Plus.

The Bureau worked tirelessly to test all of the equipment and enhancements so they could be certified in time for deployment. In the year preceding the transition, the Bureau tested and certified 15 different systems configurations or upgrades to voting systems, including Ballot on Demand. In addition, the Bureau conducted functional testing and source code review for the Okaloosa Distance Balloting Project. This project established a secure distance balloting environment for approximately 100 overseas voters. The Bureau granted "provisional certification" status to Okaloosa County for this project for 2008 only.

My staff and I made site visits to each of the conversion counties in the spring of 2008 to assess the progress of the conversion. The visits had a two-pronged approach: First, we discussed training of staff, poll workers, voters, and the counties voter education plans with the Supervisors, and second, we discussed technical issues relative to the deployment of the new systems with the county technical staff. In addition, we conducted follow-up conference calls to track the counties progress.

Prior to each election, we met with voting system vendors to discuss technical support for counties and where vendor staff would be deployed on election day and night. We have a system in place to track voting system performance during both early voting and on Election Day. As is Florida's practice, we worked with vendors to identify problems and find solutions and then analyze whether we have a localized event or one of statewide impact.

Thanks to the hard work of the Supervisors of Elections and their staff, Florida had a very successful system conversion on a Presidential election year. We were all prepared and had plans in place to deal with any situation. Elections are not perfect and never will be as long as there are people involved in the process….election officials, candidates, poll workers, press, voters, advocates…all unpredictable pieces of a larger puzzle. Failure is not having a problem during the election; failure is not having a solution for that problem. We continually stressed to supervisors of elections the need to have plans in place to react to the many issues that may arise. Our role as elections administrators was, and is, that of "risk mitigators"!

Our actions as elections officials influence voter confidence…and not just YOUR voters. Voting systems issues have a ripple effect felt across this country. How many times have you had to answer questions about your systems raised by press reports in another jurisdiction? Voters shouldn't be reading stories about problems with the systems; they should be reading about your solutions to the problems. It is my philosophy that voting system vendors are partners, not adversaries. (3 legged stool analogy.) If our certification team identifies issues during testing, vendors have a seat at the table to resolve those issues.

One of my first priorities as we began planning for the 2010 election cycle was to hold a joint meeting of our voting system vendors. I felt it was important for everyone to be at the same table, to hear the same message and to work together to improve elections in Florida. We discussed the issues encountered during the 2008 election cycle and set a game plan for resolving those issues prior to the 2010 elections, as well as, being prepared for what 2010 will hold.

At that meeting, I shared with the vendors my frustration with the lack of quality control in the manufacturing process. Despite our rigorous testing, we have noticed what we tested is generally not the same quality equipment that arrives in the field. Not only must we ensure the systems are secure and reliable but also that they work as promised. But how do we accomplish this? Simply put….the industry, the field of elections administration, has got to "settle down".

Elections, and more specifically the voting systems industry, have become knee-jerk and reactionary and it's not necessarily their fault. We must be deliberate and proactive in our actions…We need to look to the future of this industry with common sense….We need to plan

and prepare for the development and deployment of new technology….We must strike a balance between academics, activists, and elections administrators.

We all want high standards for voting systems but to what end? Machines are rushed into development to meet constantly changing standards or requirements from jurisdictions and then rushed into production to be deployed in the field to meet aggressive deadlines. At some point, and I think sooner than later, the "improvement" of these systems and the costs of these improvements will come to a point of a diminishing return. For the voting system vendors, trying to meet the moving targets of federal requirements and 50 unique state requirements is like trying to change a tire on a car going a 100 miles an hour.

So where do we go from here? I believe the future of voting system certification is a multi-layered process because one size does not fit all. On a federal level, I would advocate testing firmware and software using reasonable minimum security standards and minimum hardware testing for durability, dependability and environmental conditions, such as temperature, water, and dust exposure. States should have the option to test equipment using their own state standards and state certification programs or to utilize a secondary testing program established by the EAC for those states that do not have a certification program. That program could be more in-depth and modified to test for specific requirements. I believe there should be a quality assurance program on the federal level to track the manufacturing of the equipment.

And let us not forget the end users, the people on the ground who program, maintain, and deploy the equipment. In Florida, I am changing our program to include beta testing at the county level to run parallel with the official certification event. That way, the firmware, software, and hardware can be run through its paces in the field during the official certification event rather than after.

Working together on a multi-level approach to certification, we can restore calm to the industry, the federal government can guarantee consistent products produced across the country, and states can retain their rights to set standards for their communities.

It has been an honor to speak to you today. I would be happy to take any questions.