

September 29, 2005

Dear Technical Guidelines Development Committee members,

I am writing to you in hopes of adding my voice to others that feel that our sacred right is in danger. That each and every vote cast in America is captured and counted. I have two major areas of concern. The lack of verifiable paper ballots in current electronic voting systems. (I live in Miami-Dade, FL which has such a system.) and the lack of transparency in the electronic systems that count the electronically cast votes.

First: Please ensure the results of all future votes our great country. Insist on a verifiable paper ballot for every state in the Union. The paper ballot must be visually inspectable with the names of the candidates and clear, positive voting marks. They should be deposited into secure voting ballot boxes much the same way we have done for years. Furthermore, the paper ballot count should always be the authoritative count when disputes arise.

Second: Electronic voting is great when used to get results quickly but are too easily manipulated without detection. Require that all electronic voting systems source code be publicly available and that the code be electronically fingerprinted with a high-grade algorithm after it has been approved for a given election and allow independent voting verifiers to check the fingerprint of the software on any given voting machine not exceeding more than 10% of the total units (this is to prevent disruption while allowing for verification.) The large voting systems companies would still retain copyright and intellectual property rights but they would not be able to use that as an excuse for obfuscation of the internals of the systems. Suggest to Congress that a law be passed prohibiting voting systems vendors from restricting local governments from inspecting the internals of the voting systems under the guise of intellectual property/trade secret protection.

Counting a vote is not rocket science. There is nothing proprietary in what a Diebold or ESS system do. It is in essence what computers and software have done effectively for nearly a half century, to add numbers and store information.

I have been in IT for 15 years and know full well how easy it is to modify electronic records and systems to suit the need of the modifier. I currently work as a self-employed IT consultant for home office and small office users and spend much of my time recovering data from heavily compromised PCs. I work hard to ensure going forward they are as secure as

can be while still being usable. The voting system in this country deserves no less.

I am hopeful that an institution such as the NIST with bright and distinguished people can achieve toward ensuring the American vote remains the highest standard of democratic expression worldwide.

Sincerely,
-felipe

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