

April 11, 2007

To: Representative in Congress

From: Charlene Stanford, Executive Director
Bloomington Board of Election Commissioners

Re: HR 811

Having worked in the field of elections for nearly 20 years I am concerned about several points in this bill. As an election official, my goal is to run clean, fair, accurate elections that leave partisanship out of the equation.

I'm afraid HR811, as written, will create more havoc than solutions. I encourage all legislators to read the bill themselves to appreciate our concerns. Please utilize the expertise of your home state election officials and ask questions about the procedure changes and costs that will be required to implement the mandates.

Some of my concerns are:

1. The 2008 timeline is impossible to achieve. The changes that are required would take approximately 18 months to four years to accomplish. The changes will require updates and upgrades of equipment by the vendors followed by federal and state certification of equipment. Once this is complete, the equipment would need to be manufactured, delivered and training of both election officials and poll workers would follow. With the next general election less than 19 months away, the timeline will not work.
2. Implementation could be best achieved in stages rather than all at once.
3. Illinois and other states have new laws requiring that the DRE paper print out be the official ballot.
4. The state of Illinois requires retabulation of a randomly chosen 5% of precincts within every jurisdiction. Other states have similar requirements designed to assure accuracy of Election Day counting.
5. HR811 would require the establishment of an audit board that would add a heavy financial burden to states. (These costs would double in Illinois because of the two week waiting period to count provisional and late arrival mail-in military ballots. This would require a two stage audit per Section 323 of HR811)
6. There is no evidence that a hand-counted audit will be more accurate than a machine count. This certainly will lead to a much later reporting of returns.
7. Voter confidence is already in jeopardy. A public mistrust of the people conducting hand counted audits could jeopardize the strides we have all made.
8. Funding for these mandates greatly falls short of the cost of implementation.

9. Many jurisdictions have poll worker concerns. Continuous changes have made training difficult. Poll workers quit because of the constant changes required to comply with HAVA and new state law. More changes could bring a substantial shortage of poll workers to all of us.
10. States have changed election law to comply with HAVA. This effects all elections. Please ask yourselves, should the federal government, which has fewer than 600 elected offices, make mandates that change how the states choose the over 500,000 other elected offices? No.

To sum up:

- A. Free, honest, secure, impartial and accurate elections are a right of the citizens of our great democracy.
- B. Congress has the responsibility to act with careful deliberation and thought when changing our laws and without unneeded haste.
- C. Members of Congress should be watchful and dialogue with professionals in the fields affected by their actions.
- D. Election officials of each state encourage such dialogue and look forward to helping members achieve these goals.
- E. Changes to election procedures and goals would be best if made at the state level.
- F. HR811 is not a responsible way to achieve these goals.

Sincerely,

Charlene M. Stanford, Executive Director
Bloomington Board of Election Commissioners