



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

March 28, 2007

Dear Member of Congress:

The Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO), which represents the local elections boards in the State of Maryland, strongly urges you to oppose HR811 and S559. While we too support the goals to increase voter confidence, we are seriously concerned with a one-size fits-all approach that will not fit all and, ultimately, will negatively impact the voters.

Our specific concerns are as follows:

- Hand Audits – (a) Only election officials should be permitted to handle election documents, not outside sources. (b) Final certification could be significantly delayed pending completion of audit, which could, in turn, interrupt continuance of government operations by delaying swearing-in of newly-elected officials, including the electoral body.
- Voter-Verified Permanent Paper Ballot – It would be impossible for every jurisdiction nationwide to purchase and implement a new [optical scan] voting system before the 2008 Primary Elections. In addition to certification and procurement requirements and systems availability, many jurisdictions are contractually obligated on their current voting systems.
- Polling Place Scanners – This technology does not exist. Once developed, it must be thoroughly tested.
- Funding – An estimated \$1B in federal funding *must* be made available immediately, without delay, if this legislation moves forward. Election costs have already tripled since implementation of HAVA, and local jurisdictions especially have been hit hard.

STOP! Please do not continue this forward motion expecting all of these major changes to be made, and made efficiently, in less than a year's time. There are many factors to ensuring efficient elections, including but not limited to:

- Timing – Quite frankly, there is just not enough time to make all these changes, including testing, procurement, development of training materials, and training of staff, election judges, and voters, in time for 2008. It took HAVA two years to pass and four years to fully implement, although some states are still struggling to comply with all of the requirements.
- Election Judges – There is a nationwide shortage of persons willing to work as election workers. The pay is very low for the 16-18 hours they work, and the equipment and/or procedures have changed every election cycle.

- Voter Service – Voters deserve a voting system that is reliable and accurate. However, introducing new equipment and voting procedures in an expedited manner will only create more confusion and longer lines at the polling places. We should be encouraging, rather than discouraging, our citizens to get out and vote, making sure they are informed as to what to do and how to vote.
- Cost – Local jurisdictions simply cannot afford millions more dollars to make major system changes year after year. We have already put millions into our current systems, with millions more still obligated under contract.

Let the EAC finish the work it started. Let the NIST continue to develop voting system standards, including testing and certification.

Please, give us election officials the necessary time to perfect the current systems and policies. We are dedicated professionals who are deeply committed to fair and accurate elections conducted with confidence and integrity.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Gail L. Hatfield, Chair

Sara Harris, Co-Chair

MAEO LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

mld

cc: Michael Sanderson, MACo
Alysoun McLaughlin, NACo
Heidi Freier, The Election Center
Maryland Delegation