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Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections

NEWS RELEASE

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Pinellas County Elections Supervisor Announces

State Audit Report Confirms Integrity of March 7 Election, Voting Software

The Florida Division of Elections audit report of Pinellas County's March 7 elections confirms that the election results were reported fairly and accurately, according to Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections Deborah Clark.

"The report further confirms that our WinEDS election management software matches the certified version and was not altered or updated since 2002," said Clark, who requested the audit to reassure voters of the integrity of the election and voting equipment.

Other findings in the state audit report included:

- Pinellas County's tabulation system, voting machines and card activators were confirmed to be working accurately and using certified software.
- The database lockup on election night did not affect the election results, but was caused by the database being undersized. In fact, the procedures listed in the Advanced WinEDS Training Manual for sizing a database were found to be inadequate and would not have prevented the database lockup if staff had strictly used its guidelines.

Several recommendations included in the audit report were already in practice in Clark's office; another recommendation is required by a recent state law and has been added to poll worker training.

"We appreciate the Division of Elections conducting the audit on our behalf," Clark said. "While we were already practicing some of their recommendations, we will re-emphasize the issues they pointed out in our staff and poll worker training and implement any additional suggestions."

State Audit Recommendations/Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections Responses:

Ensure that the time and date are consistent and accurate on all voting machines. Our Operations Department has a double-verification process in place to confirm that the date and time are accurate at the time voting machines are set up in the election service center. Poll worker training also includes instruction on verifying the date and time on all voting machines when the polls are opened. If the time or date is incorrect, poll workers are instructed to contact Operations Department staff, who will advise them to write the correct date/time on the machine tape. We are revising the Open Audit Report form to include this information.

Ensure that voting machine internal printers are properly set up and maintained to minimize the occurrence of paper jams and train poll workers to handle paper jams. Our Operations Department has a preventive maintenance plan in place to keep internal machine printers working properly. Additionally, poll worker training for machine managers and precinct clerks includes instruction on handling paper jams and reprinting zero or results tapes if paper jams cause incomplete or illegible printouts. If the machine manager or precinct clerk cannot rectify the problem, he/she is instructed to call the Operations Department for step-by-step assistance.

Develop a reliable method for reconciling voter signatures and machine vote counts. A new state law effective January 1, 2006, requires that signatures in precinct registers be reconciled with voting machine counts. We have therefore added a segment to poll worker training to require that they reconcile the number of voter signatures in precinct registers with machine vote counts. Poll workers will also be urged to carefully observe voter signatures and note when a mistake is made in the precinct register.

Develop a recovery plan for the tabulation system. Based on discussions during the audit process, our Information Technology staff is developing a series of tabulation system scenarios and a recovery plan for each, including procedures for calling and documenting technical support. We will work with other Florida counties that use Sequoia Voting Systems to identify other situations that could occur.

Clark emphasized that none of these issues would affect the accuracy of an election.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The recommendations/responses section could be used as a separate sidebar.

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