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Maryland Citizens Demand Choice of Paper Ballots for March 2 Primary

Citizen Group Calls Board of Elections Grossly Negligent For Poor Security

Montgomery County, MD: Today, the Campaign for Verifiable Voting in Maryland (CVV), representing voters concerned about the security flaws in the Diebold electronic voting system, sent a formal letter to the Maryland State and County Boards of Elections to demand the choice of paper ballots on primary day. The March primary will be the first statewide vote on the controversial paperless electronic voting machines and the group representing one thousand Maryland voters does not trust the Diebold electronic voting machines will count the vote accurately.

CVV (see www.TrueVoteMD.org) charged the Board of Elections with gross negligence for their failure to put in place basic security requirements given the long known security issues first documented in the 2001 Willis Commission report. They noted that the Maryland Department of Legislative Services found that the Board had not put in the last 15 Microsoft security patches on its computers that count the vote. Last week at a House Ways and Means Hearing, Linda Lamone testified that she would not be able to address a multitude of security problems before the March 2 primary.

The CVV letter also notes that Lamone erroneously stated that she is doing 'more than any other state' to address the security issues. For example, California has developed special rules for counties using Diebold voting machines requiring them to give voters the choice of paper ballots or electronic voting (also known as "paper or plastic"). These rules apply during the current period when the Secretary of State considers whether to de-certify Diebold for illegally installing uncertified software on voting machines before the 2003 gubernatorial recall election.

"Maryland voters have good reason not to trust paperless electronic voting. These machines have been reviewed three times and each time they have been given a failing grade. Why should we vote on machines that the Board of Elections has failed to make secure and on which everyone agrees are vulnerable to computer error, and undetectable insider manipulations which could effect the outcome of an election," charged Linda Schade, co-director of the Campaign.

Schade claimed the Board of Elections should not be afraid of giving voters a choice. "The Board and Diebold have been advertising all over the state how great these machines are. If voters believe them, no one will request paper ballots. If voters don't, then it is important for the state to know that people have lost confidence in the integrity of their vote."

The group supports HB 53 and SB 393 that would require a voter verified paper ballot with all electronic voting. This would make it possible to audit the electronic votes with a paper record and make an independent recount possible.

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