

**Testimony before the Ways and Means Committee,
Maryland House of Delegates
February 1, 2007**

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee:

Two weeks ago you heard from Dr. Michael Shamos of Carnegie Mellon University. Introduced to the Committee by the State Administrator of Elections, Dr. Shamos lauded Maryland's AccuVote TS paperless touchscreen voting system and deplored the idea of replacing it with a voter-verified paper ballot system.

However, less than a year ago, in April of last year, Dr. Shamos, having learned of a serious security flaw, was quoted saying of this system:

"This one is so bad, that we can't do just nothing. Any losing candidate could challenge the election by saying, 'How do I know that the software on the machine is the software certified by the state?' "

In the nine months since then, nothing has changed. The so-called security measures that Dr. Shamos now claims protect Maryland's system have been shown, on countless occasions, to be easily penetrated with a screwdriver, or a hotel minibar key that anyone can buy on the internet. And the best the manufacturer could say in defense of his fatally-flawed system was that he couldn't believe any malicious person would actually take advantage of those flaws.

And then there is the problem of the 18,000 unrecoverable votes that were lost in the Florida 13th Congressional District race last year, a contest which was won with a margin of less than 400 votes. That election is in litigation, as will dozens of other races be in the future, in jurisdictions that employ a paperless voting system.

The point is: with a system that is totally dependent on its secret software, and that employs no recountable paper record that each voter has personally verified for correctness, there is absolutely no way for anyone to know whether the results are correct or have been corrupted, either by error or by malice. When you are repeatedly told that "the election went smoothly and there were no problems," you are either being conned or you are hearing from someone who doesn't understand the most basic principles of computer security.

Delegates, you have the opportunity this year to undo the grievous error that was made four years ago when, against the best available advice at that time, the decision was made to purchase this voting system. And it's a win-win opportunity: By replacing the untrustworthy paperless touchscreen system, which requires nearly 20,000 expensive-to-store-and-maintain machines, with a simple, reliable optical-scan system that requires only one ballot-marker, for handicapped voters, plus one ballot-counter per precinct--fewer than 2000 precincts statewide--you will be saving your constituents millions of dollars every single year.

State after state is giving up paperless voting. The U.S. Congress will almost certainly mandate verified paper records for federal elections. This year let's change Maryland from a state with one of the least trustworthy election systems in the nation into a state with one of the best.

Thank you.

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