

**2011 Venango County Specially-Appointed Board of Elections**

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**STATEMENT REGARDING DECEMBER 21, 2011  
ELECTION AUDIT MEETING**

On May 17, 2011 numerous citizens attempting to vote in Venango County's Municipal Primary Election reported major problems casting ballots on the county's ES&S iVotronic touchscreen voting machines. There was also a concerning number of undervotes in various races along with other anomalies. As members of an Election Board appointed under Pennsylvania Law to oversee the county's elections while the Commissioners were running for reelection, and charged under the Pennsylvania Election Code with the legal duty to do everything in our power to protect the integrity of those elections, we took these reports and problems very seriously.

Throughout the summer and fall of 2011, the specially-appointed Election Board fought hard to obtain a forensic examination of the County's electronic voting system. In June we accepted the generous offer of a forensic exam made available to Venango County for free by Dr. David Eckhardt and Dr. Gregory Kesden, both of whom teach in the world-renowned Computer Science Department at Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh. While the exam was pending we ordered the use of software independent voter-marked paper ballots for the November Municipal Election.

Despite numerous setbacks and delays due to interference by the majority of the County Commissioners who were running as candidates, on September 26 a forensic copy was finally taken of the County's election computer and work began. By the mid-November deadline we obtained an Initial Report on the project from Dr. Eckhardt.

In the course of receiving Dr. Eckhardt's Initial Report we learned the examination turned up several alarming discoveries that the Venango County Commissioners need to take very seriously.

Among these discoveries are security weaknesses that are potentially very damaging to the integrity of our elections in Venango County. These security weaknesses are so concerning, we as a Board do not feel comfortable releasing the actual documentation of the problems at this time because these documents could potentially serve as a 'blueprint' for someone with intent of compromising our election system. We will, however, present the full findings confidentially to the County Commissioners with the expectation that these serious problems will be addressed and corrected as soon as possible.

We also wish to point out that we have other serious concerns with the outcome of our Forensic Audit.

- 1) First and foremost, this Forensic Audit was never completed. Judge Oliver Lobaugh dismissed us on December 1<sup>st</sup> despite the fact that we as a Board were in the midst following our statutory duty to investigate election irregularities. We had hoped to use the month of December for further investigation and to complete a Final Report. We were in the process of following up on recommendations of Drs. Eckhardt and Kesden, as well as undertaking further investigations that might have shed additional light on the May Primary problems, when we were abruptly dismissed.
- 2) The time the examiners had to work was an extremely short 50 days from the day the forensic copy of the system was taken until the day the Initial Report was due. Every other major exam of voting systems has been given a much longer work period and in most cases involved far more than two people working on the project. Unfortunately, much of the opportunity this forensic examination offered Venango County was wasted as the clock ticked away precious time over the Summer. The short work period Venango's audit ended up with finally began during the busy Fall Semester (both examiners are professors with teaching

duties) and then it was cut even shorter by the voting machine manufacturer ES&S's attempts to halt the exam for their own reasons.

- 3) In Section 2 of Dr. Eckhardt's report, "Scope and Limitations" he enumerates many things that were not examined at all in this audit due to time limitations and other constraints. Several of these things could possibly have influenced or caused the reported problems in the May Primary, or could have even influenced the accuracy of the election results. Without these things being examined, we will never know for sure.
- 4) While it is true that the forensic audit did not turn up evidence of fraud or major malfunction, it likewise did not conclusively prove that such problems did not exist either.

With Pennsylvania's 2012 Presidential Primary only 125 days away, the members of the 2011 Venango County Specially-Appointed Election Board urge the Venango County Commissioners to take election integrity very seriously. Immediate steps must be taken to correct the severe security problems uncovered by this forensic exam.

Beyond that, plans should be made now to replace the iVotronic voting machines because they are approaching the end of their expected useful life. The Commissioners should bring Venango County in line with nearly 70% of the rest of the United States, and permanently institute a modern, verifiable voting system using voter-marked paper ballots.

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