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Information Policy, Census, and National Archives Subcommittee
“Ensuring Fairness and Accuracy in Elections Involving Electronic Voting Systems”
April 18, 2007

I want to thank the committee members and Congressman Clay for inviting me here to speak with you all today.

My name is Robin Carnahan, and I am the Secretary of State for the State of Missouri.

As the chief election official for the state of Missouri, it is my job to help ensure fair and accurate elections. Today, I'd like to share with you information on election administration in 2006 in Missouri – a year of many changes.

By all accounts, the 2006 elections in Missouri were fair, accurate and secure. In November, over two million voters, or 53 percent of Missouri's eligible voters, cast a ballot. In most areas, elections were smooth and efficient as well. This is particularly noteworthy because of the many federal law changes that were implemented for the first time in this election.

In Missouri, all elections are actually run at the local level, and we have 116 separate election jurisdictions in the state. So, the credit for this success is due to the hard work and dedication of Missouri's local election officials, their staff and our dedicated poll workers.

To document what happened in the election, my office drafted and released to the public a report called “Voters First: An Examination of the 2006 Midterm Election in Missouri.” This report provided an examination of both the successes and the issues that voters and election officials encountered on and around Election Day.

First, the successes of the 2006 election included

- fair, accurate and secure elections;
- replacement of punch card ballot systems with printed paper optical scan ballots
- new voting equipment that is accessible to people with disabilities as well as
- the most accurate voter list Missouri has ever seen.
- Also, the absence of any reports of voter impersonation or voting fraud in the 2006 election in Missouri was notable.

There are several recurring issues and themes that we were able to identify, and the report concluded with a number of recommendations to make improvements in those areas.

LONG LINES

First, one of the recurring complaints from all over the state was that many voters had to wait too long in line to vote. The long lines stemmed from a number of different issues, from a few polling places running out of ballots, to poll workers and voters learning to deal with new technology.

A recommendation to cut down on the long lines voters face on Election Day in Missouri is through Early Voting, as currently allowed by at least 30 other states.

NEW VOTING EQUIPMENT

Another recurring issue surrounded the new voting equipment.

The 2006 election was the first election in which all 116 Missouri local election authorities used some form of new voter technology in order to be in compliance with federal and state law. In Missouri, it is the ultimate responsibility of the local election authorities to choose and purchase the voting equipment used in their jurisdiction.

The Office of Secretary of State provided guidance to the local election authorities to help ensure that new voting equipment is secure, accessible, and accurate.

All Missouri counties used a combination of optical scan voting systems in which voters mark a printed paper ballot and that ballot is put into an optical scan machine for counting, as well as at least one DRE or “touch screen” voting machine with a voter-verified paper audit trail in every polling place.

So unlike in some other states, all votes cast in Missouri included a paper record of the vote.

Although we did receive a few reports of issues with both the optical scan and touch screen voting systems, overall new voting equipment worked well. The majority of Missouri voters voted on optical scan voting machines, and the remainder voted on DRE machines.

Missouri also conducted one statewide and a few legislative district recounts in 2006 using the new equipment. The recounts used the optical scan paper ballots and the voter verified paper audit trails and were thorough and accurate.

We made a few recommendations for improvements in this area to ensure transparency and voter confidence. First, enhance training materials for local election officials on current rules and procedures for testing and use of new voting systems, and second, develop methods to better educate voters about how to use new voting systems.

POLL WORKERS

Another common theme we noticed related to poll workers both in terms of numbers and training.

In an election full of changes and new voting equipment, Missouri's poll workers did an impressive job. But, we need more people, especially technologically savvy people, to get involved, so we recommended efforts like increasing recruitment, using students, and allowing poll workers a day off work with pay, just as if they were serving on jury duty.

VOTER MISINFORMATION

We also received a number of reports about voter misinformation in the 2006 election.

One month before the election, in October 2006, the Missouri Supreme Court upheld a lower court ruling that struck down as unconstitutional a photo ID law that was passed by the legislature.

Thus, it is particularly noteworthy that the type of voter fraud allegedly prevented by photo ID — voter impersonation at the polls — was not reported as a problem in Missouri.

However, there were reports of voter misinformation and nearly one out of every five complaints received by the Secretary of State's office concerned a voter being asked for the wrong type of identification at the polls on Election Day. Our recommendations include uniform voter education materials and greater poll worker training to address this issue.

VOTER REGISTRATION

Issues surrounding voter registration were reported in the press and to our office.

Since the 2004 election, much had been done to improve the voter registration process in Missouri. In addition to the new statewide voter registration database list, a new state law required that anyone being paid to register new voters must be registered with the Secretary of State's office.

One of our recommendations on this topic was to explore the feasibility of Election Day voter registration and/or automatic voter registration for those who are qualified to vote when they apply for licenses at Missouri DMV offices.

Also, in 2005, the Department of Justice sued the state of Missouri and the Secretary of State's office over alleged violations of the National Voter Registration Act. This past Friday, a federal judge ruled that my office not only complied with federal law with regard to voter registration lists, but also went beyond its requirements through our many efforts to assist the county clerks and election boards with their responsibilities. The ruling also confirmed that there is no evidence of voter fraud in Missouri.

I know that you are discussing a lot of important federal election reforms here in the Congress. As you discuss how best to proceed with legislation that would affect elections, I hope you will keep in mind these five principles adopted by The National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) regarding federal election reform efforts:

- Avoid preemptions of state authority.

- Provide reasonable timeframes for implementation.
- Gather input from state and local officials.
- Guarantee full funding for federal mandates.
- Allow for maximum flexibility for state implementation.

In closing, I want to thank you for inviting me here to testify before the committee today and for your work on these important issues. Ensuring both the integrity of our nation's elections and the confidence of the American people is a vital charge. I hope my comments help as you work to achieve these common goals.

Thank you.