

March 20, 2007

***Open Letter to Congress:  
A call for open Congressional hearings before voting on election reform legislation***

This is the most important challenge you will ever face as a guardian of democracy.

As our elected representatives, you are about to address legislation proposed to resolve the numerous and serious problems with electronic voting and to decide whether United States elections may use electronic ballots to record our votes. But a basic question has yet to be openly and thoroughly explored:

Is democracy served by the use of electronic ballots?

Those who advocate using electronic ballots say that a representation of the votes (a display on a computer screen or a secondary paper printout) gives sufficient proof that the secret internal computer record of the vote contains the voter's intent.

We disagree. Voter intent can only be assured if the voter is able to verify the ballot that is counted. But no voter can verify an internal computer record. Therefore, we believe that all votes must be cast on paper that has been marked by the voter's hand or by a non-tabulating ballot-marking device, and that all those paper ballots must be counted by hand or by an optical scanner.

Our ballots are the heart of our democracy, and therefore, determining the form our ballots shall take is the proper business of all citizens. The decision cannot be at the sole discretion of the representatives those ballots are used to elect.

How shall we resolve this issue? We call upon Congress, before taking any vote on any election reform legislation, to hold open hearings to explore this question: Should electronic ballots be allowed in United States elections?

Our nation was founded on principles of open debate and discussion. We call on you to demand televised hearings, in prime time, with public participation, including but not limited to testimony from many election integrity activists and voters who have cast electronic ballots.

Respectfully,

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